

COMMONWEAL



**AN ENCOUNTER
WITH
LADY POVERTY
WILLIAM DI CANZIO**

POLAND: THE AFTERMATH OF CORRUPTION

**Mary Rothschild
& Edward Schau**

THE CHURCHES THAT WOULD NOT DIE

**Peadar Kirby
Borys A. Gudziak
Janice Broun**

CORRESPONDENCE:

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Quinn's sins

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: In your issue of May 4 you published a series of articles relating to the legal and ethical predicament of Nancy Cruzan. One article ["The bishops misstep," by Kevin Quinn, S.J.] was harshly critical of the brief filed by the United States Catholic Conference [USCC], on which I was counsel of record. Because the article is extraordinarily misleading in its characterizations of the facts, law, and philosophy embodied in the brief, I take this step to correct the record.

Nancy Cruzan's situation presents a most difficult and perplexing personal issue for her family. No one doubts their sincerity or the depth of their feelings. However, the case has not been accepted by the U.S. Supreme Court to resolve this personal dilemma. Rather, most scholars agree the Court will examine the development of privacy jurisprudence in this context. The USCC endeavored to do what any *amicus curiae* is supposed to do, i.e., be helpful to the Court.

Thus, the theme of the brief addressed the central privacy issue presented by the case. It was not the amalgamation of absolutes and fears offered by Kevin Quinn to your readers. Our brief takes no final position on whether Nancy Cruzan should be (depending on one's outlook) compelled to live or forced to die. In fact, the brief preserves the ultimate question for moralists and ethicists to continue the debate on moral, theological, and ethical grounds.

By contrast, the Supreme Court is presented with a legal case. From the legal perspective, Attorney Quinn confuses the word "presumption" with "rule." If the brief had focused on "rules," Attorney Quinn would be correct: the brief would indeed be staking

itself to an absolutist position on a moral principle. Rather, the brief uses the more carefully chosen word of legal art, "presumption." In cases of the removal of food and water, the brief offers the common

On June 25 the United States Supreme Court announced its decision in the case of Nancy Cruzan, the subject of the accompanying exchange. By a 5-4 majority, the Court upheld the right of the state of Missouri to require continuation of artificially supplied nutrition and hydration of a patient in a permanent vegetative state, absent "clear and convincing evidence" that the patient, while she was still able to do so, had expressed an intent to decline such treatment. In our judgment the decision does not significantly affect the issues discussed here by Mark Chopko and Kevin Quinn; their comments, written prior to the Court's announcement, are published without change.

THE EDITORS

sense view that there should be a presumption favoring such basic means for human life. Presumptions, by their nature, can be overcome in appropriate circumstances. Indeed, the brief recognizes that there might be such exceptional circumstances in which food and water artificially supplied might be removed in cases where the treatment itself is overly burdensome and painful to the patient or plainly useless. This is hardly an absolutist position.

To determine whether Nancy Cruzan's case could justify termination of food and water, it is essential that one first understand the facts of the case. Nancy Cruzan is not terminally ill; she is not dying. Therefore this case does not present a question of "allow[ing] her to die naturally." In addition, her guardians do not seek permission for "the removal of Ms. Cruzan's gastrostomy tube." The tube would stay

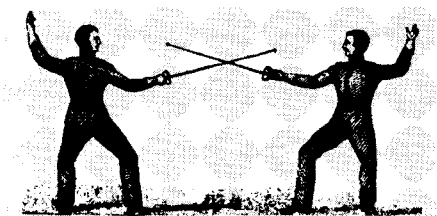
in and would be used for the administration of just enough fluids and anticonvulsion medicines to reduce seizures while she slowly dies. Therefore, this is not a case about stopping bodily intrusions or ceasing medical treatment. The "intrusion" of the tube and the medical "treatment" would both continue. Therefore, even under Attorney Quinn's analysis, this case does not present the issues he postulates.

On the legal question, Attorney Quinn does not address the central theme of the brief: whether the U. S. Constitution guarantees, under the rubric of fundamental personal privacy, a liberty to end one's life. In reviewing the development of the privacy doctrine from its jurisprudential origins in the nineteenth century through important constitutional law developments in the early part of this century, the Conference argued that such an interest is not encompassed within what had been historically understood as the realm of personal privacy beyond the reach of the state. If the Court reaches the result urged by Nancy Cruzan's parents, it will adopt a fundamental privacy interest so rigid that it will resist any consideration to the contrary. We think the better view of the privacy doctrine is to the contrary.

(Continued on page 426)

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X-ing communication

Cardinal John O'Connor often says more than he intends and as a result ends up in a position other than the one he set out for. His nineteen-thousand-word column on abortion (*Catholic New York*, June 14), said a great deal. It was meant to clarify and inspire; in part, it did. But by threatening politicians with excommunication, the cardinal diverted attention from the prolife movement's major task: limiting the number of abortions by building a moral and political consensus that speaks to and for the majority of Americans. The fallout from the cardinal's statement overshadowed his words.

The response of Catholic politicians to the cardinal's use of the E-word was the universal reaction to someone wielding a club: first duck. But more disturbing was the way in which the statement significantly shifted the discussion from his intended purpose—to draw attention to what might be done to limit abortions—to an argument about excommunication and the separation of church and state, particularly as it applies to Catholic politicians. How this contributes to the stated objective of the bishops' Hill and Knowlton ad campaign to persuade the wider public of the church's views is hard to fathom.

It is hardly surprising that just about everyone—not simply tabloid headline writers—took the column as a serious warning to Catholic politicians. O'Connor has, in fact, reiterated the warning on several occasions since the initial column. Nor could he have doubted that other bishops would follow his lead. The day after its publication, Bishop Thomas Daily of Brooklyn remarked in a radio interview that if excommunicating a politician would "clarify issues, sure, I would use it."

In a question-and-answer format, the column took up, with varying degrees of thoroughness, a series of issues of differing weight. Cardinal O'Connor does not go as far as to apply his teaching on the politics of abortion to voters. (Recently Bishop John Myers of Peoria, Illinois, took up that facet in his pastoral letter "Obligations of Catholics and Rights of Unborn Children," *Origins*, June 14. Myers writes: "As voters, Catholics are under an obligation to avoid implicating themselves in abortion.... One is formally complicit in the injustice of abortion when one votes for a candidate even partially on the basis of his or her pro-abortion positions.") But the cardinal does "require" that professors at Catholic universities under his jurisdiction should silence themselves when it comes to differing publicly with the church's teaching on abortion.

The cardinal writes that announcing his message causes him pain. We do not question his sincerity. But the pain is not his alone, as the faces of Catholic politicians such as Congresswoman Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.) so dramatically showed. Such pain and painful reflection in these grave matters is appropriate—a reaction at the heart of all genuine religious reflection. Since the bishops have failed thus far to convey to Catholics the church's teaching on the seriousness of abortion, the cardinal

was obligated to make that teaching clear and apprehensible. In the latter undertaking, however, he has fallen short. His discussion of natural law, for example, is thin and unconvincing. (That Socrates refers to such a law does not demonstrate its application to today's abortion issue.) A weak presentation of a contested concept only further erodes its usefulness.

Ever since last November when the USCC issued a statement on abortion, reminding public officials and others that "No Catholic can responsibly take a 'prochoice' stand" (*Origins*, November 16, 1989), various bishops have sought to clarify and apply it with mixed results. Nonetheless, as Cardinal Joseph Bernardin wrote compellingly in these pages (April 20, 1990) concerning the church's proper course following the *Webster* decision: "To grasp the opportunity of a post-*Webster* period, we need to join firm conviction... with a capacity to build a consensus at the legal level that will significantly reduce the number of abortions." Building that consensus is a critical and long-term task which, realistically, may take decades. In 1990, threatening anathemas is almost certainly the surest way to undermine the process and to insure the church's views will not reach those who need to hear them the most, those Americans (about 60 percent) who are unhappy with the present legal status of abortion.

NELSON MANDELA

In a time of sound bites, he speaks in paragraphs. Engaged in a life-and-death struggle in which some of his opponents represent the darkest aspects of human nature, he avoids labels, incitement, polemics. A champion of democracy and of the oppressed, he brings to the hustings a courtly, even regal bearing. Nelson Mandela's record compels admiration and his presence commands respect: responses that, in an era of small expectations from public figures, easily turn into something warmer.

What may be most impressive about Mandela, however, is his refusal to pander. During his U.S. tour he never forgot (or let anyone else forget) his objectives: to "keep the pressure on" the white minority government of South Africa, to raise money for the African National Congress. Equally, he never downplayed his history or his principles to evade questions others might have found awkward. In the American context, for example, why acknowledge Fidel Castro as a "comrade-in-arms"? Why declare solidarity with the PLO? Since President F. W. de Klerk has committed himself to negotiations on the future of South Africa, why does the ANC not renounce the use of violence? Mandela replied forthrightly:

The enemies of the U.S. are not necessarily the enemies of black South Africans. Decades ago, when agents of the ANC first sought international support, the U.S. would not give them the time of day, while Cuba gave instant encouragement and practical help. The Palestinians, like Mandela's people, are not free citizens in their own land, and the government of Israel has seen fit to cooperate with the government of South Africa in ways that serve apartheid. As for violence: It is the South

African government that sets the terms of engagement; it has neither abjured the use of illegal violence by its own forces nor taken irreversible steps to end apartheid.

On violence, Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. would have answered differently; but Mandela defends an understanding of revolution and violence closer to the politics of Sam Adams—or George Washington—and his view is compatible with just war ethics. On other issues—the ANC's alliances outside and within South Africa, its economic program, the depth of its commitment to basic liberties and to pluralism—there may be cause for uncertainty, as there is about the real intentions of the white minority.

But none of this gives reason for questioning the stature and integrity of Nelson Mandela. By his words, his demeanor, his life, he earned the welcome he received and set a standard worthy of emulation.

REPORT FROM POLAND

AFTERMATH OF CORRUPTION OLD HABITS DIE HARD



On May 27, Lublin poll workers, reporting early to their precincts for Poland's first fully free elections since World War II, were confronted with a problem. The ballots they were expected to hand out were oversized sheets of paper on which the candidates for local offices had been reduced to fine print in cramped, narrow columns. Boxes to check were next to the names, but the small typeface and lack of margins made it difficult to discern which box went with which candidate. The confusing layout was particularly nettlesome because Communist functionaries running for reelection were placed side-by-side with the overwhelmingly more popular Solidarity slate. Indignant election volunteers spent the morning painstakingly penciling in lines to mark the distinctions.

Whether the ballot was the work of an inept printer or a sly, last-gasp attempt at deception by the dying regime, it was just one more affront to Poles who for forty-five years have been at the mercy of clumsy and contemptuous bureaucrats. In Lublin and throughout Poland, voters threw out the Communist officials to reinstate autonomous local governments. But the excitement of the revolution in Poland and throughout the former East Bloc has now given way to the mundane routine of making it work, even in the small task of making a ballot readable.

Poles are tired of cleaning up the mess left by communism. Their hopes that life would improve under democracy have been tempered with the reality of mounting unemployment, ever rising prices, and a decline in real wages. When asked when it will get better, some reply with sarcasm: "It already was." Registering their fatigue and frustration with the general condition of their country, they stayed away in droves from May's local elections.

In fact, as election day neared Lech Walesa had been sent scrambling to avert a crippling strike by rail workers.

Given the country's obviously inefficient and environmentally disastrous industries, no one, including the aggrieved rail workers, questions the need for a radical restructuring of the Polish economy. What remains to be seen, however, is who will control this process. Adam Michnik, editor of Poland's first independent daily and a member of Parliament, says that while the old order no longer exists, the new order does not exist. "In other words, our lot now is freedom, but democracy is not yet our lot."

Election day in Lublin was one stop on our Polish pilgrimage, a twelve-day tour retracing our steps from a similar journey two years ago, working on a research project on the nature of hope. Hope has been emblematic of Poland's history and inextricably linked to the past decade. It inspired Walesa to subtitle his autobiography "A Way of Hope," and the Gdansk shipyard workers to memorialize their murdered colleagues with anchors affixed to crosses—hope crucified. Hope is one of many characteristically Polish paradoxes.

Take the image of Poland as a garden. From Gdansk to Lublin to Poznan, the countryside was a field in flower in the first true "Polish spring." Every small village and wayside was adorned with beribboned shrines to the Virgin Mary, the icon of Polish Catholicism. Horse-drawn carts lumbered along the byways and farmers toiled with hand scythes. Notwithstanding serious concerns about pollution, it appears that abundant Poland could feed itself until one recalls that a third of the 38 million Poles live "in areas of ecological disorder," with some soils so contaminated that authorities have banned vegetable farming.

The newly unfettered market has also created an image of Poland as one wild garage sale. Everything from car parts to produce to family heirlooms is peddled by entrepreneurs who spread out a blanket and open shop. Those open-air markets are not new; technically illegal, they were nonetheless tolerated under the old system. But capitalism has supplied a new vigor. Today one can stroll in the shadow of Warsaw's garish Palace of Culture, a monument to Stalin's bad taste, to buy a bottle of milk here, a pork chop there. Poles reportedly now purchase half their food from impresarios doing business from the backs of pickups.

The apex of the entrepreneurial fever sweeping Poland is found at Warsaw's sparkling new Marriott Hotel. When we visited, an international business conference was taking place. We heard American, British, and German accents mingled with Polish ones as executives "networked" new business opportunities. Westerners on expense accounts are accustomed to the cost of upscale accommodations, but at \$160, a night in the Marriott is equivalent to three months' salary for the average Pole.

Some critics, including Walesa, have said the collapse of the Communist system and Poland's rush to create a private market economy have spawned a new nomenklatura of the wealthy elite, a kind of hybrid of the former privileged bureaucracy and the budding entrepreneurs. Others fear the creation of a new "capital-friendly" economy will encourage German designs on Poland's western boundaries. One Polish friend told us, "The German economic invasion has already begun."

In keeping with *Commonweal's* usual summer schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated August 10.

Life in Poland hasn't changed that much, insisted some old friends and new acquaintances. They reminded us that the Polish press, literature, and theater have been far freer than their counterparts in the Soviet Union or the rest of Central Europe. But from our admittedly narrow Western perspective, we sensed a difference. Gone were the surly shop assistants and apathetic waiters. Political posters were plastered everywhere. Most of all, we felt the absence of uncertainty, the equivocal atmosphere that two years ago seemed saturated with fear and danger.

Now there is MTV on the television and kiwi fruit in the market stalls, albeit at prices not many can afford. Heated political debates, which can extend far into the night, now include jovial arguments about whether the Solidarity press spokeswoman is too biased or whether Jacek Kuron, the founding father of Polish dissent, should button up his shirt to look more professional.

In Fabryka Samochodow, where sixty orange Zuk trucks roll off the assembly every day, there was obvious pride in the changes. Solidarity maintains its own suite of offices in the factory, which now produces trucks according to market analysis rather than meaningless government quotas. Employees who drink on the job will be sacked immediately. As we watched the workers tool auto parts with outmoded equipment, our trade-union guide told us anyone can make trucks with the technology available in the West. "With Polish machines it is an art," he said.

At the Polish Aviation Works in Swidnik, we puzzled over the decor of another Solidarity office, which displayed a crucifix and photo of Pope John Paul II on one wall and a *Playboy*-style pinup calendar on another. When the Communists held sway, it was much easier to define where Solidarity stood. Walesa writes that there was always a religious relevance to the struggle for democracy since the union never advanced an economic or institutional theory. It simply sought human dignity. Bogdan Borusewicz, chairman of Solidarity in the Gdansk region, described the new challenge for the trade union as twofold: "To get control of the economy and to defend the weakest." Asked whether Solidarity wishes to be a union or a political party, he told us the only issue is for it to remain a political force. Borusewicz insisted that Solidarity does not take directions from the church. It listens but takes its own course, he said.

We watched Zbigniew Brzezinski, dressed in medieval garb, accept an honorary doctorate from the Catholic University of Lublin (KUL). Said to be the third most popular Polish personality, after Walesa and the pope, the former U.S. national security advisor called for a new moral framework to undergird the restructured society. There is no place for hatred or bias, he said, because "mutual profits are more valuable than former prejudices." He advised the church not to expend its energy in issuing orders or setting restrictions but in educating and encouraging the public.

Joachim Kondziela, chairman of the Department of Social Sciences at KUL, elaborated by discussing two issues being

fiercely debated within Polish society, issues that reflect the wide range of personal beliefs. One is an attempt to introduce Catholic religious education in the public schools. The other is abortion.

Regarding Catholic instruction in schools, Kondziela said he feared it would cause "a new ideological isolation of non-believers." Abortion, relied upon in this overwhelmingly Catholic nation at a rate similar to that of the United States, is an incendiary issue in Poland as well. Kondziela said he feared a protracted debate would result in a "polarization of attitudes" that might destroy the public consensus needed to achieve economic and social reforms. In a democratic state, this priest observed, there is no need for the church to mediate between state and society. It must assume a new role, he said, helping people learn to integrate the sometimes conflicting spheres of national and everyday values. KUL is stepping up to that task, launching new courses in the ethics of entrepreneurship, marketing, and banking.

Blaming one's predecessors is an old political trick. In Poland, it has been elevated to an art form. What isn't openly acknowledged is Czechoslovakian President Havel's persistent theme that Eastern Europeans shared responsibility for maintaining totalitarianism, if only by outwardly giving in to conformity and hypocrisy. As Havel puts it, "The main pillar of the system [was] living a lie." Living such a lie, according to Michnik, means basing all relations on pretense. "It means I look a person in the eye while actually watching his hands. It means that I assume him capable of cheating. It also means that I have the

same opinion of humanity in general and of myself."

A tangible result of Communist oppression is that Poles have learned to compartmentalize their public and private lives. Public lives, which included jobs or any interaction with the government, were conducted relative to the corrupt system. Private lives were the universe of family and friends. Two different moralities existed, side by side, so that what might be legal might not be considered moral; and what was illegal might often be considered moral. When people find it necessary to subvert a system in order to survive, the borders between the moral and amoral are understandably hazy.

Several days into our stay, one of us asked our host for assistance in placing an international phone call. Given Poland's creaky communications systems, such a call is a tedious process that involves making a reservation hours in advance. In no special hurry, the caller was amazed when our Polish friend lied to the operator: the call must be connected immediately because the caller's infant son was ill.

It was a small thing: telling a tiny "white lie" so that a phone call could be placed more quickly. But it surprised us; until we recalled that in the past we had praised and laughed at our host's cunning ways of outwitting the system, a shrewd skill that, to our minds, now no longer seemed necessary.

MARY ROTHSCILD & EDWARD SCHAU

Mary Rothschild is a reporter for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. Edward Schau is a clinical psychologist in Seattle.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

WHO'S ON FIRST AND WHAT'S ON DECK

In the mid-1960s Charles de Gaulle, then president of France, remarked that the United States had won the cold war but didn't realize it: his point being that the war in Vietnam was unnecessary from the point of view of American interests.

Well, whether or not we had won the cold war as early as twenty-five years ago, there is no question that we have won it now. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe means that the United States and its allies have prevailed in the protracted struggle between Communist East and anti-Communist West that began in the aftermath of World War II. The winner is liberalism—liberal democracy in government, an economy largely free enterprise in nature, and a soci-

ety based on equal rights and individual freedom. The liberal ideal was set in motion in the eighteenth century, made great progress during the nineteenth, then went off the rails in August 1914. Next came Bolshevism, fascism, nazism; then World War II and the cold war. For much of the twentieth century it looked as if liberalism was destined to be little more than a brief historical interlude, with no long-term future except possibly in one corner of the globe. Then came 1989, the year of revolutions in Eastern Europe. After a seventy-five-year interruption, liberalism is once more on the move, stronger than ever, destined once again, it seems, to be what its nineteenth-century enthusiasts always said it would be, namely, the ultimate future of the entire human race.

This is a plausible scenario; it is even an attractive scenario. But there is of course no science of the human future, something many of our nineteenth-century forebears did not realize when they optimistically predicted the shape of things to come. Just to remind ourselves that we never know what the future will be, let me indicate two other possible scenarios.

In recent centuries there have been three great ideologies of modernization. Protestantism, liberalism, and socialism. Not all three were self-consciously proponents of modernization. Quite the contrary. Protestantism was an attempt to react against what it regarded as the corruptions of the then-modern age, an attempt to return to the spirit of the primitive Christian church. Liberalism eventually became a self-conscious champion of modernization, but in its early stages—in the age of Jefferson, for example—it wasn't clear whether its goal was to recover an idealized past, to move toward an idealized future, or to achieve a transhistorical ideal of virtue and happiness. Socialism alone of the three was always deliberately and self-consciously modernizing in nature. But all

three were ideologies of modernization in effect even if they were not always so in intention.

Each of the three has had its moderate form and its more radical form. Moderate Protestantism was to be found in the Anglican and Lutheran churches; radical Protestantism was embodied in the Calvinist-inspired sects of Geneva, France, Scotland, England, New England, and Pennsylvania. Liberalism in its more moderate form, inspired by John Locke and Adam Smith, was typical of the English-speaking countries. More typical of France, Italy, Spain, and Latin America was liberalism of the radical type: statist, anticlerical, often even anti-Christian. Socialism in its moderate form was characteristic of Western Europe, in its radical (or Communist) form of Russia and China.

It has often been asked why socialism never caught on in the United States. At least part of the answer to that question is that America, from the moment of its first settlement, already possessed one ideology of modernization, Protestantism, and eventually acquired the overlay of a second, moderate liberalism; so what need has this society ever had to invest in socialism? Socialism is needed only in those societies that have no significant traditions of either Protestantism or liberalism.

The collapse of communism (the radical form of socialism) may signify, as most seem to think it does, that the pendulum of modernization will now swing back to liberalism. But if a reverse swing of the pendulum is underway, why should it stop at liberalism? Perhaps it will swing all the way back to the first ideology of modernization, Protestantism; or, since Catholicism eventually managed to modernize itself, perhaps to some transdenominational Christian theory of modernity.

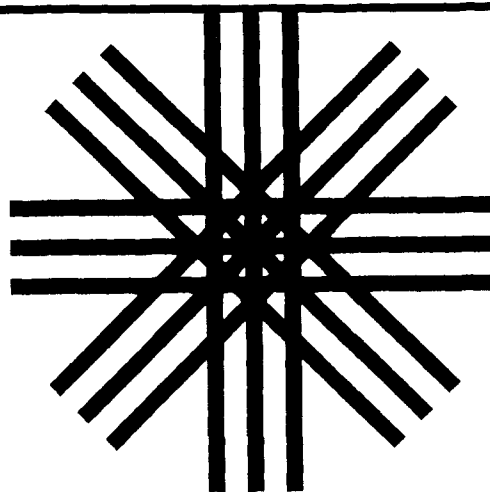
In other words, perhaps the collapse of communism portends not so much the triumph of liberalism as the revival of Christianity. As modernization took increasingly extreme form it became more and more atheistic; little wonder Christianity lost heart and ran for cover. But now the momentum has turned in Christianity's favor. Liberalism, which once seemed to be a transition period on the road from Christianity to communism,

may yet be a translation period: this time on the road back from communism to Christianity.

This scenario assumes, of course, that history moves like a pendulum. In some ways it does; radical revolutions, for instance, always seem to have their Thermadorian reactions. On the whole, however, it is doubtful that the pendulum is the key to history.

Another possible scenario is that we have reached the end of the era of modernization, or at least of ideologies of

modernization. If, after several centuries of modern social and cultural evolution, we finally arrived at the most extreme form of modernization ideology (i.e., communism); and if that ideology failed, and if history does not move in a pendulum-like fashion: then where do we go from here? Modernization, at least as an ideal if not yet as a fact, may well have played itself out. The human race, having exhausted one great historic option, may be on the verge of beginning a search for another. □



THE GRAYMOOR PRIZE

The Friars of the Atonement announce the establishment of the Graymoor Prize to be awarded the best essay on any aspect of ecumenical or interreligious affairs. The prize is intended to encourage and support new ecumenical and interreligious ideas and perspectives. The award-winning submission, which may take the form of a scholarly or critical essay or a personal narrative, should appeal to the interests of the general educated reader.

Original and unpublished essays of approximately 2500–4000 words should be submitted to the editors of *COMMONWEAL* who will make the final decision following consultation with a panel of experts. The winning essay will receive a prize of \$1,000 and will be published in *COMMONWEAL*. The editors reserve the right not to award the prize.

Deadline: October 15, 1990. Announcement of Prize: January 1, 1991. The prize-winning essay will be published in *COMMONWEAL*'s Contemporary Theology Issue, January 25, 1991. This essay will become the property of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute. All other essays will be returned to their authors.

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THE WAR WITHIN

TWO STRAINS OF FEMINISM

The television cameras and the buses of reporters are long gone from the Wellesley campus. The controversy which swirled around the choice of Barbara Bush as commencement speaker is fading from memory. By the day of the speech the question raised was a tired one: Does a woman whose status and activities are the result of her marriage have anything to offer by way of advice or example to today's young women? One hundred and fifty of Wellesley's senior class had thought not.

"Wellesley teaches that we will be rewarded on the basis of our own merit, not on that of a spouse. To honor Barbara Bush as a commencement speaker is to honor a woman who has gained recognition through the achievement of her husband, which contravenes what we have been taught over the last four years at Wellesley," they said in their petition.

We all know how the First Lady's response on graduation day added to her enormous popularity. Her *joie de vivre*, her confidence, her humor and common sense won the day. And Wellesley's seniors enjoyed the publicity for their 1990 graduation, the prospect of which had probably been one of their reasons for choosing her. They knew that a highly visible woman speaker would add luster to the occasion. They are, after all, of the media generation.

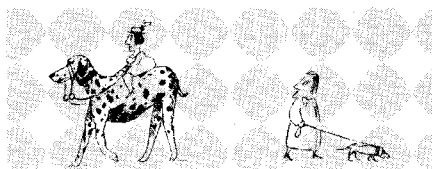
A psychiatrist associated with Wellesley, Dr. Jean Baker Miller, seems to agree. That both Alice Walker (the seniors' first choice) and Mrs. Bush were celebrities—as were all the others on the seniors' list—she said, "reflects the power of television and the media on young people." Mrs. Bush is no stranger to PR, to the power of the symbolic, to the impression of the photo opportunity; her invitation to Mrs. Gorbachev to accompany her to Wellesley was ample evidence of that. Two First Ladies doubled the impact at Wellesley and, incidentally,

added a grace note to the orchestration of the coverage of the summit.

The original question was almost lost sight of in the excitement but each First Lady endeavored to answer it in her own way. Barbara Bush stressed the need for the acknowledgment of diversity and the need to make the effort "to learn about and respect difference, to be compassionate with one another, to cherish our own identity, and to accept unconditionally the same in others." She recognized the dedication and hard work that the graduates must devote to their careers but pointed out in a memorable statement: "At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict, or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a child, a friend, or a parent."

Even the protesters, whether they think of their future careers in terms of making money or contributing to society, whether they own up to it or not, hope for personal lives enriched by love and friendship as well as satisfying work. Of late there has been a spate of articles about their immediate predecessors, career women in their late thirties and early forties trying to become mothers by conception or adoption before it is too late. Obviously the rewards the protesting students spoke of have not been enough for many of the women who have gone before them.

As the director of Wellesley's women's studies program, Susan Reverby has pointed out there are two strains in feminism—one, the struggle for rights and equality; the other, the recognition via women's history of the caring, unpaid contributions women have made to the world.



Raisa Gorbachev in her more traditional speech struck this second strain: "We women have our special mission. Always, even in the most cruel and troubled times, women have had the mission of peacemaking, humanism, mercy, and kindness. And if people in the world today are more confident of a peaceful future, we have to give a great deal of credit for that to women who are active in advocating friendship, cooperation, and mutual understanding among nations."

These comments were probably only partly satisfying to the protesters. Indeed they were probably not satisfying at all to onlooker author and psychologist Phyllis Chesler. She had said, "This choice [of Barbara Bush] tells us that there is a war raging in the hearts and minds of women...many women still want to live in the castle, still believe in the myth of rescue by marriage." She faulted the First Lady for her closeness to administrations which have done little for the poor, the homeless, and minorities, and noted that "picking her isn't going to solve the problems of women." She added that the choice raised questions about the education the students are getting "or can college save society."

But there is a connection to the text of the letter that was left—evidently by the students of the protest petition—on the five thousand folding chairs of the graduation audience. The letter requested that the First Lady "take a definite and vocal stand on critical issues that shape the lives of women in the United States," and it cited such issues as family and medical leave, day care, welfare services, etc. It is fair to ask the First Lady to do that? As the president said in defending her, "She's not trying to be something she's not." She's not an Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, and has never wanted to be. What she is is a woman who has, as far as outsiders can see, made the very best personal use of the life she chose and its eventualities.

Whether a First Lady's support of family values should go beyond example and translate into specifics was a question raised almost ten years ago in this column and, interestingly enough, in connection then, too, with Barbara Bush, a presidential candidate's wife. Perhaps it is time to address it again. □

AN ENCOUNTER WITH LADY POVERTY

REAL LIFE AT THE DRAMA SCHOOL

WILLIAM DI CANZIO

I started to write an essay about the soup kitchens of New Haven. Writing Creative Nonfiction was the name of the course, and since my Yale students were struggling to do just that, it seemed right that I should too. The idea had been brewing awhile. I was living in the nation's seventh-poorest city, dominated by perhaps its second-richest private school. I admired the splendid celebrated architecture of the university, but my admiration often tripped over those who wandered past the beautiful buildings, yet had no keys. Sometimes the contrast shouted violently, but day to day it moved me mostly by its silence—the sight of scavengers, for instance, pulling empties from the dumpsters on Library Walk; or the face of one man in particular, who made his rounds diligently with a shopping cart in the quiet of Sunday mornings, when the bins overflowed with the trash of last night's parties and few people would intrude with their gaze. A boy accompanied him, about ten years old, his son.

I wrote a forty-page first draft and began to revise. I had done the footwork, had met some remarkable people—but the result was dead. Why? I kept asking myself those questions with which I would plague my students: What is this really about? Where is the passion? And I found the questions leading me past the soup kitchens to an issue more intimate: How did I come to be there, mopping up after two hundred people in the parish hall of Christ Church on Saturday afternoon, when across Broadway at the Co-op I had just narrowly escaped charging a pair of faddish overpriced sunglasses? This is how I got there.

I had wasted the morning—overslept, talked on the phone—and now I couldn't even do my laundry: somebody had beaten me to both machines. But how could I work? That ape in the next building was bellowing over—what, some “Pro” wrestling match? WILL YOU SHUT UP! No, I never had the guts to yell into the brick canyon; I'd let that German lady on the first floor put him in his place. Meantime, if I went to the library, maybe I could write, so I left my building in a chilly September rain.

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Across Park Street, near the path before the Cabaret, I saw an old woman walking south. With her right hand she leaned on a cane, with her left she held overhead a useless umbrella, its nylon skin covering only half the spokes; from each arm hung a bundle wrapped in a garbage bag and tied with neckties. She would take a few steps and stop, take a few more and stop, not, it seemed, because she was confused, but rather because it hurt to walk. I took her for homeless. I crossed to her.

“Do you need some help?” I said, blind to the irony of offering to carry a bag lady's bags. She looked at me wryly, then past me toward her destination. “Thanks,” she said, “but it's pretty far, and I don't want to take you out of your way.”

This was no coy plea for sympathy. She meant it. She was turning this into a matter of my convenience. I would not let her win so easily.

“Are you sure? Where are you going?”

“You know the Doctors' Building over by the hospital?” she said, hoping to discourage me with the distance. Instead she triggered a Pavlovian response, a gush of sentimentality, by which I imagined she must have an appointment at some bleak clinic or other. “Look,” I said, “I've got a car around the corner. Why don't you let me drop you off?”

She sized me up from behind a pair of bifocals with harlequin frames, circa 1963. “Okay,” she said, and we started off three steps at a time, at which rate I figured half an hour to walk to the car. “How about if I bring it around?” I said and rushed off, after a moment's indecision over whether to leave her my umbrella or take it myself. I took it. I do not have time for this, I thought.

What with warming the engine and New Haven's one-way streets, it must have taken me ten minutes to get back. As I turned the corner onto Park I could not see her, and hoped that she was gone, but there she was where I had left her, having given up on her umbrella and folded it away.

When I opened the door for her, she eyed the bucket seat skeptically, but managed to sit down by turning her back to it, leaning hard on her cane, and lowering herself slowly. With some inches yet to go and no strength left for support, she gave up and dropped her backside, wincing, while I watched incompetently. Then she put her hands under her thighs and lifted her legs into the car. I got behind the wheel.

She was five-feet-two or so, quite hunched over, with a pleasant face, fair skin, hazel eyes—about sixty-eight, I guessed. She wore men's "desert boots," loosely tied, and an old raincoat of a faded leopard pattern with a garbage bag over her shoulders, tied in front like a shawl. She covered her hair with a scarf, and the scarf with a smaller garbage bag, knotted under the chin. Considering the weather, she was practically dressed, but all that plastic had caused her to perspire, and when she loosened the outer wrappings, the car smelled of something—not at all disagreeable, but familiar and yet hard to place: a grade-school smell, like rainy days in grade school....

"Where are you coming from?" I asked her.

"The soup kitchen," she said, "At Christ Church, the soup kitchen."

That was the smell! Soup, canned vegetable soup. But Christ Church? I knew the building, little more than a block from where I lived; heard the services were full of bells and incense and prayers of Jacobean cadence. But where did they hide a soup kitchen in its petite Gothic grandeur?

I must have given her a look of pity. "I'm a volunteer," she said quickly, "I cook there Saturday mornings."

As we drove, she surprised me with her vocabulary, which told me that she read, and with the precision of her directions. All this struck me as improper to someone in her condition, not that I knew anyone to compare her with. And, though it seemed to me that she had every right to be preoccupied with herself, she wanted to find out about me:

"You go to Yale?" she said.

"Yes, the Drama School."

"You must be rich."

"Penniless," I said, "believe me."

"Really? My day only rich men could afford to send their sons to Yale."

She had been a seamstress once, but seven years before had been struck by a car and had been unable to work since. "Now one leg's shorter than the other," she said.

The blades wiped the cold rain from the windshield. "Is it worse for you in this kind of weather?" I asked.

She laughed. "I get up with the pain and go to bed with the pain."

"Don't you take anything for it?"

"Those pills they give you, they don't help. I'm saving up for orthopedic shoes, but they want two hundred dollars. See that sign? Turn left."

The traffic was splashing great fans of water onto the deserted sidewalks about I-95. I was clocking the distance, going on two miles now, the last leg of it up a steep grade.

"Do you usually walk?" I asked.

"When I get up and move around I forget the pain—at the soup kitchen, I'm so busy I don't feel it."

The Doctors' Building, it turned out, was not her destination, but a landmark she hoped I would recognize near Lafayette Street, a half-block of rowhouses, the remnant of a neighborhood long since sacrificed to urban planning. As we pulled up, she touched the little crucifix by the gear shift. It was not the first time that object had embarrassed me. "That's nice," she said.

"It came with the car," I said, "it used to be my mother's. I'm scared to take it off." I hoped she would think I was joking.

"Leave it," she said, "it's nice."

I parked the car. "How old are you?" she asked.

"Thirty-five last Sunday."

She laughed out loud. "Congratulations! Happy birthday! I took you for nineteen! Still in school? A man your age is usually settled. Don't you ever fall in love?"

"Twice a week," I said, and grinned, though the question made me squirm. I started to open the door.

She stopped me. "Nothing serious?"

"It's always serious," I said, still trying to smile. This was all none of her business. But I regretted my impatience, so I added something that I also regretted because it sounded phony in my mouth: "Would you pray for me?"

I carried her bundles up the steps to the front door. "You shouldn't lug so much stuff," I called over my shoulder, "I don't know how you would have made it, walking."

"They're clothes," she said, puffing along behind me, "from the soup kitchen. I give them to people I know that need them." She had reached the landing. "When's your day off?"

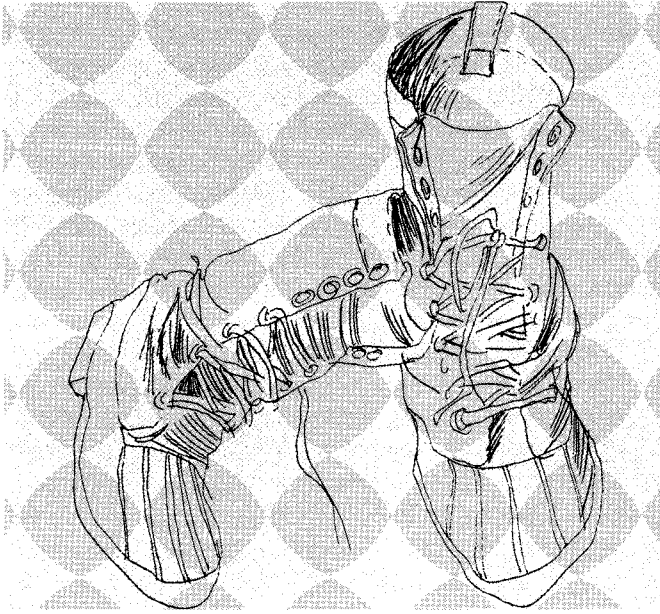
She was asking for more than I cared to give. "My schedule's kind of tight, these days," I said, still with my back to her. Expecting reproach, I turned to face her, but she was flushed with gratitude.

"It makes all the difference when somebody's nice," she said, "I don't know how to thank you." I lowered my eyes as she studied me. "My son was taller and heavy-set. He got very depressed. His wife was making more than him. When they get that way they need somebody with them all the time, but he was far away. He shot himself."

I gave her my number. I figured it was safe, since she had no phone. I invited her to call me from the soup kitchen if she ever wanted a ride. She said she would pray for me. She wanted me to meet her granddaughter who worked for the airlines in Florida.

The Chapel of Saint Thomas More at Yale is a tall, pleasant, anglophilic building about thirty yards from Christ Church on Park. The emotion of its architecture feels deliberately restrained, as if it were self-conscious about being Catholic in such a setting. The walls are grey; the windows, clear glass, where etched saintly figures defer to the light rather than transform it, as stained glass would, into mystery. But color and fancy, held secret from the nave, assert themselves in the side chapel; there, with her mantle of midnight stars and her brown Aztec beauty, our Lady of Guadalupe presides over an antique Spanish altar of variegated painted marble, and votive ships sail down from the ceiling in homage, like delightful toys.

The view from the chaplain's office, however, shows more of the parking lot than of the chapel or the adjacent garden, a parking lot where barbed wire had been recently affixed to the fence at the rear, to discourage thieves. A portrait of the chapel's founder (classmate of Cole Porter's; his family's bank supplied the cash to pay for Alaska) gazed at me from above the mantle



as I asked the chaplain for two hundred dollars for orthopedic shoes.

"No problem," he said, "we can take it out of the Poverty Fund. How do you want it?"

Cash? She might get mugged. Check? Could she negotiate it? "How about if we tell her to get fitted and have them bill the chapel?"

"Sounds reasonable," he said and puffed on his pipe.

I drove back to Lafayette Street and tried the unlabeled buzzers on her door. Nothing. In the alleyway behind the houses I found a neighbor hanging wash.

"You the sheriff?" she asked. Her dog, at the sight of me, had commenced racing back and forth behind the cyclone fence.

"No, I'm a friend of hers," I said.

She pointed to a window on the second floor. "She lives up there, but she don't answer the door." She tapped her temple with her index finger: "She's crazy, that one—you should see her place—a pack rat, saves everything." While she struggled to subdue the dog, which was barking savagely, I thanked her and left.

At home I called the soup kitchen. "Is she in some kind of trouble?" the director said. I explained my purpose and asked that he have her call me next time she came in—which she did.

"Who are these people?" she said.

"It's a church."

"Why would they want to help me?"

"Because—I don't know—it's a church."

"What's the address—let me get a pencil—zip code? How do you spell it?"

I answered her questions as best I could, but could neither quell nor understand her suspicions.

"No," she finally said, "It's no good now; you'd be throwing your money away. I can't get fitted till the swelling goes down."

"But hasn't it been years?"

"Yes. Years. It still swells up."

"Okay, okay," I said, "but it's there whenever you want it."

"Thanks," she said, "I'll let you know."

Then I asked her cautiously if she wanted a ride home today.

"No. It's nice. I'll walk."

So I said good-by and, glad not to have to drive her home, put my feet up on my desk. I marveled at how little it had cost me to do something worthwhile. Lovely day. The ape next door was quiet; the apartment was flooded with southern sunlight. I liked what I had done with it: I had not brought much furniture from home, but what I had was handsome. I like it spare: visitors admired it. "How spacious," they would say, even though the place was small. And there, out the window to the west, I could see a blackbird preening all alone at the top of that tall misshapen fir, my "Zen tree," I called it. In the corner, my geodesic sphere, which I'd recently repaired, was rotating gently.

Most Saturdays went by without a thought of her. Oh sometimes I'd remember, but it was always afternoon already, and what could I do, cruise the streets of New Haven chasing an old woman? Some days, when spring

came, I'd see her sitting in the sun on York Street, by the gates of Pierson or Davenport. I'd say hello, if she saw me, and even stop to chat, if I had the time, but I had gotten busy with a musical I'd written, with revisions and rehearsals and rushing back and forth to Philadelphia, where my composer lived. It turned out to be fun, and the audiences liked it, but I was disappointed when I saw it "up" on stage. In my push to write a show and please the Drama School, I felt I had neglected to write a play.

I completed the MFA program in May. I don't know if New Haven's bag ladies and panhandlers disappeared for commencement, but they were invisible on Library Walk that day among the crowds of well-dressed families and professors in their gaudy splendor. The weather cooperated, the carillon played *Gaudeamus igitur*, and when the undergraduates received their degrees, they released a thousand blue and white balloons. Then the Drama School adjourned to the University Theatre for diplomas and to the Cabaret for lunch.

I lingered in New Haven—took a job in English in the summer programs, watched my classmates, the actors and designers, move to New York, while I worked on a commission from Actors Theatre of Louisville and worried about how I was ever going to teach argumentative writing. I also received word that the university would be "improving" my building with a sprinkler system and new wiring, which would require about a week in each apartment, beginning on the first floor. I lived on the third floor. It would be some time before they reached me. I buried the notice on my desk.

One Saturday in July I was working in the library on that play for Louisville. I felt stalled. The page had just become opaque again, having been for a while a window on an imaginary stage, where the heroine—working-class, wretchedly married, neurotic—who needed money to replace her storm windows, was playing a slot machine at Caesar's in Atlantic City. But scenes from her present and past life kept intruding on her game, until she grew disgusted with it and sought the Wheel of Fortune to play for higher stakes. The croupier had chained her to the Wheel.

Would she ever get down?

I looked up from my work: it was raining lightly against the leaded windows; the bronze putty in the fountain in the court was glistening and wistful. Twelve-thirty, the time of day when I first had seen the old woman. Time for lunch. I knew I'd take a detour.

I found her walking west on Broadway not far from the soup kitchen. Her limp was worse. Instead of a cane, she leaned on one of those two-wheeled pushcarts, which she maneuvered like a walker. Since it took both hands to push, she did without an umbrella in the misty rain. I offered her a ride.

"What about my cart?" she said.

It fit into the hatch of my car. This time when she dropped herself into the bucket seat, she wept with pain. "My hip!" she cried. "If I knew I'd die next year I wouldn't bother with an operation, but my mother lived till she was eighty-five."

"Hey," I said, "you've got to cheer me up today."

"You? How could a young man like you have any troubles?"

So I complained about my misery, and her spirits brightened as she listened to me gripe, and so did mine. I felt I knew this woman, the child of immigrants, raised in the Depression, like the heroine of my play. But the winter had indeed been cruel to her. Her daughter had died in an auto crash, leaving a husband and two teen-agers. She had spent several weeks with them in Kentucky after the funeral. The old woman told it all without self-pity and gave me a dose of what it might be like to live with her: "They never should have built that house, I always told them; she used up all his money, and the foundation leaks. They have to run a—what do you call it?"

"Dehumidifier?"

"A dehumidifier—thank you—down the cellar day and night. The electric bill is simply astronomical. 'What good is it?' I told my son-in-law, 'It won't even last till you remarry.' But he says he has no intention, not until the kids are grown. He's right. It's seldom that it works out, a stepmother or stepfather. I saw what my second husband did to my son."

We drove past Lafayette Street to where the city had moved her in February, subsidized housing for the elderly, over by the train station, an area notorious for muggings. "It's not bad," she said, "but it's all one room. That's embarrassing for an older person. Some things you have to hide."

The lobby door slammed metallically behind me. "Sshh!" she said, "what about the people upstairs?" She checked her mailbox, from which the lock had been broken, and greeted two fellow tenants, a large man in a wheelchair, who looked too young for this building, and a stubble-faced little man, who seemed unable to speak. In the waiting room adjoining, a woman sat alone and unoccupied on a row of plastic sheets bolted to the floor, like those in a bus terminal. She did not acknowledge us.

The second-floor corridor smelled of ammonia. "Looks clean," I said.

"Yeah," she said, "but it's got bugs."

The apartment itself would have been a large and pleasant studio, except that wall to wall, to a height of five or six feet, were cardboard boxes packed and closed, a spare refrigerator,

bundles of newspapers—like the contents of a basement or attic stored in this room. Stored, but not lived with, for I saw no furniture among it all, not even a bed. She had arranged a bench of milk crates against a wall, padded it with blankets and old coats, and on this she slept.

"They stole my sheets," she said. "I had all my bedclothes in a chest, and they stole that too."

I did not ask her who these thieves might be, but glanced into the bathroom, where I heard a steady flow of water in the sink. "That must be leaking half a gallon a minute," I said.

"They say they are going to fix it, but they don't."

A rack on the bathtub was filled with drying clothes. "I can't sit down in that tub," she said, "I have to give myself a sponge bath. I can't reach my feet—that's the worst part with this hip. I have to ask somebody."

She steered her cart into its niche among the boxes by the door. "I just bought a jar of very expensive shoe cream—two dollars for a little jar—and they stole it. I had it right here, and now it's gone."

"Maybe you misplaced it," I said. She looked at me defensively. "I often misplace things," I added cautiously.

"What things?" she said.

"I don't know—papers, things, on my desk."

"How do you know nobody stole them?"

"Who'd want them?" I said too quickly, and repented the sarcasm. "Besides, they usually turn up. Look, let me open a window for you. It's close in here."

"No! I don't get into opening the windows. Then I have to shut them. I have an ice pack I use to cool me down." Taking her cane, she started for the kitchen. "My mother was a very domineering woman, but she left us money. My brother disowned me so he wouldn't have to share."

"You don't mean that."

"Yes. He hired that woman who ran me over. I was on the sidewalk. She had to jump the curb."

I wish I hadn't heard it, but I had. My vision was dilating. As she faced me across this roomful of junk, her figure all shad-



owy before the rainstreaked windows, she grew in stature until she seemed representative to me—of what? Were we all like her, trying to defend ourselves with worthless acquisitions when we really wanted something else? What? To be touched and healed? To be stripped naked and loved with no regard to what we do or what we own...? I couldn't help but think of Fortune's Wheel, as I had seen it once in a medieval drawing, with people clinging to it, top and bottom, crowned and crushed, while the blithe goddess, smiling at the viewer, ignored them and turned her dainty gear indifferently. Why would we not let go?

"What kind of fruit do you like?" she said. "I can't make you drive me all over the city and give you nothing." She urged me to take a little carton of cherries, which she must have brought home from the soup kitchen. "Save the container—we can use it again." I saw a stack of them, empty, by the door on my way out.

To reach my apartment these days I had to climb past two floors of work in progress, the halls a chaos of plasterboards and sawhorses and snaky wires—but the construction had not yet touched me. Once home, I stood by the kitchen sink, rinsed the cherries, ate them, and surveyed the clean uncluttered space. I imagined her trying to accommodate her body to her "bed" and shook my head as if to shake away the picture, but saw her walking fitfully at two, at four, her radio going static by her head. The cherries were sweet. What could I do for her? I had some new sheets on the bathroom shelf, still unopened. I could give them to her—or offer. Inappropriate? Too personal? Would I miss them? I found myself checking a passage in Chaucer, some lines haunting me from the *Romance of the Rose*:

And alderlast of everychon,
Was peyneted Povert all aloon
That not a peny hadde in wolde...
For naked as a worm was she....

There, last among the Vices and Deadly Sins whose portraits decorated the outer walls of the Garden of Love, was Poverty—a woman, alone, naked, homeless. It had always struck me as cruel to include her, whom some would call a virtue, in such company. What did the poet have in mind? Was she to be a talisman, to ward off what she represented from the Garden of Love itself, which was reserved (like the university) for the young, the unblemished, the affluent...? I caught myself thus composing "lit crit" with my nose in a book, grew disgusted, and shoved poor Chaucer back between Blake and Dante.

But I did not know what to do for her, so I kept returning to the soup kitchen on Saturday afternoons to offer her a ride, even though she claimed, "I'd be better off walking," every time her backside smacked the bucket seat.

One Saturday I found her on the steps of Christ Church. She had walked half a block from the kitchen and was resting, one protective hand on her cart, in the shadow of a pointed arch. Listlessly she greeted me; gave me a copy of the page of grievances which she had trudged across town, pushcart and all, to present to her lawyers a few days before. It spelled out in hand-printed Roman capitals what it felt like to be her:

I CANNOT BEND TO REACH TO TIE MY SHOE-LACES; I CANNOT PUT MY STOCKINGS ON; I CANNOT REACH MY TOES TO TEND PERSONAL HYGIENE; I CANNOT CROSS THE STREET W/IN TIME OF THE TRAFFIC LIGHT; I CANNOT HOLD MY UMBRELLA AND CANE WHEN IT RAINS, SNOWS, AND CARRY PACKAGES, GROCERIES, ETC.: I AM THE PERSON WHO *STILL SUFFERS THE TRAUMA, THE EXCRUCIATING PAIN* IN THE EIGHTH YEAR INCLUDING ALL THAT IS WRITTEN HERE AND I AM STILL BEING PERSECUTED....

"The girl at the lawyers' was nice to me," she said, "she walked me down to the street. It was raining. Somebody got out of his car and put ten dollars in my hand and drove away. Why would anybody do that?"

"People want to help you," I offered.

"I tried to take his license. Could they trace it?"

"Why?"

"So I could tell him thank you."

"I don't know if they could trace it."

"Look," she said, pointing to a figure at the bottom of her list, "that's what they want to charge me. That's why they want me to settle out of court, so they can get their money. I won't even have enough left for my operation. Does that seem right to you?"

The sum represented about a third of the total settlement. "I don't know what lawyers charge," I said. "Maybe I can find out."

"But I don't want to settle out of court. I want to hear that woman lie—I want to hear her commit perjury on the witness stand. I was on the sidewalk. She had to jump the curb."

"Come on," I said, "let's go." Passers-by were eyeing us strangely.

"You know, she sounds a little like my mother," said Liz mischievously at brunch one Sunday by the pool of her pre-Revolutionary house in Darien. The old woman had become my preoccupation. I talked about her with my friends. "She's obviously a paranoid schizophrenic," she said, "but she seems to function in her little world. Frankly, I'm more interested in how all this affects you. Relax."

I found her words as soothing as the setting. I had met her, a psychiatrist—tall, attentively groomed, "older," easy to look at—in a playwriting class. She confided in me that the voices in her head let her alone when she started writing plays. Now she sided with the professionals: "Can you imagine the scene she must have caused in that office?" Yes, I had to laugh. "I'll check her lawyers out for you," she said, "maybe they chase ambulances, but that's a standard fee they're charging. Here—don't let it get to you."

She handed me a glass of orange juice, freshly squeezed. "You're such a good cook," she said. "Jake and I think you should move in and let us take care of you." The sunlight imparted a certain luster to her silver ringlets, styled, she told me once, by Joanne Woodward's hairdresser.

“I don't know what to do for her,” I said to John one night at the Summer Cabaret. A physicist, the first person I had met in New Haven, he was being kind enough to let me sleep in his spare room while the construction was going on in my apartment. “Maybe that's the idea,” he said, “maybe you're supposed to feel helpless.”

“Yeah, maybe.”

The house lights dimmed. He leaned over and whispered, “Or maybe you're supposed to write a play about her,” and the lights rose on stage.

Helpless? I was living out of my gym bag, carrying the course I was teaching in my briefcase, and when I visited my apartment, I wished I'd stayed away. The air was hazy with plaster dust; my belongings, including my very unportable typewriter, were piled in the middle of the floor and loosely covered with sheets that did not protect them. The walls had been stabbed and channeled, exposing laths, studs, wires, and in one spot my neighbor's bedroom. Pots, plates, anything on the kitchen shelves had been dumped into the sink; the contents of the bathroom were thrown into the tub where they were mingled with fallen chunks of ceiling; and the work dragged on for weeks. Tenants talked of suing; meantime what could I do? I stayed with friends, went to the beach, grew a beard, ate ice cream, played football—none of which I would have done in my undisturbed routine. But when the summer session ended, I wanted to escape. I joined my family at the Jersey shore, where, quickly bored with the boardwalk and the beach, I realized I missed my struggle in New Haven.

I had accepted a lectureship in the English Department and returned late in August, determined to slug it out as part-time teacher, part-time writer. I expected to find the construction completed, my apartment ready for me to work in it, but nothing had changed since I left. So I went at it myself. It took me two full days to excavate—washing each dish, vacuuming each book—until with some satisfaction I was finally able to plug in my typewriter again, via extension cord, to the only functional outlet. Just as I did so, someone knocked. “New fuse boxes,” the carpenters said, and in fifty seconds with an electric hacksaw they reduced a section of wall to rubble and resaturated the air with plaster dust. I found the manager, complained—with vibrato. He apologized and made a gesture at having it cleaned up, but so what? They would be back, and meantime I would live with the mess for as long as it took them to finish. So I drafted my syllabus for English 120 and ignored my memory of the old woman.

My birthday fell during the first week of class. I came home from teaching as fired up as an actor after a good show, hypocritically greeted the workers on their break on the front steps, and found a letter in my mailbox from Actors Theatre of Louisville. I knew it was a rejection—good news would have come on the phone—but the adrenalin was flowing anyway: maybe they had tried to call. I ran upstairs and opened it. It was indeed a rejection. They had decided not to produce the play I sent them. Well, I told my students to expect twenty rejections before an acceptance, and the line always got a laugh. But it was my birthday. As usual, I had neglected to make plans, so



I would eat dinner tonight with Peter Jennings and read for Thursday's class. A saw was buzzing in the corridor. The workers were back from break. I dialed the phone.

“Hi, John—still room for me?” I asked. He had offered me a place in his household, which he shared with a statistician and a political scientist, but I had turned them down to stay where I was.

“Yes,” he said.

“Then I'd like to move in,” I said—that quickly, before I could stop myself.

“Glad to hear it,” he said. “I'll have to confirm with the others, but I'm sure there's no problem.”

“Great. Thanks. Can't talk now—okay?”

“Okay.”

I had to hang up quickly: I was weeping. “Cut it out,” I said, and slapped my face, then recoiled at the corniness of the gesture. What was it? The rejection? Writing that play had cost me plenty, but when I sent it out I knew it was nothing they would produce. Sure it hurt—I never cried over rejections, though. What was it then? This building? The scarred walls and the gutted panel where a fuse box had yet to be installed? What? The old woman? Did my heart finally decide to crack for her? No, not for her, but for me, for what we shared: this place was empty, empty as her cluttered studio, and I was no less alone than she, and no less vulnerable. Not my lack of furniture, but absence made it empty, the absence of another, of others. There was nothing here but me, and I was sick to death of me.

But—I had just changed that. With a phone call, a question, an acceptance, I had changed something. I sniffled back the tears. Now I was scared: what had I given up? What had I surrendered? The saw was grinding louder in the corridor; the ape next door was bellowing. “WILL YOU SHUT UP!” I yelled, and heard myself laughing out loud.

That Saturday I returned to the soup kitchen. Usually I waited outside for her, but today I walked past the row of men with formidable eyes who sat on the curb by the door. Inside, the kitchen was long and narrow as a subway car, and almost as noisy, with twenty people pressed around the island counter, cooking, washing up, chatting with the clients who had to pass

through the kitchen on their way to the dining room. I noticed no social line of demarcation between clients and workers, some of whom may have been clients themselves once, or still were. A jam-box was broadcasting "rap"; the pot-washer was dancing as he washed; the woman drying plates bumped hips with him and sang. And there was the old woman, serenely packing her cart with food. She had finished the morning's cooking and was preparing to go.

"Hello," I called.

"I never know where I'm going to see you," she said. Her eyes were merry, her face untroubled. Something had changed her aspect in the eight weeks since I had last seen her. She firmly refused a ride. "It's easier for me to walk than sit down in that car." She tied her scarf. "Do you know Skip Ferry?"

I shook hands with the director of the soup kitchen and reminded him that we had talked once on the phone.

Then she said to Ferry all of a sudden, "He wants to work here."

"Terrific!" he said, "we can really use the help till the students settle back in."

I opened my mouth to protest. Maybe I had said something to her once about how I might like to volunteer if I had the time, but that was months ago and I was teaching now....

"My schedule's kind of tight these days," I said, glimpsing through the swinging doors long tables of very poor people eating macaroni casserole: my companions were obviously disappointed. A passing volunteer knocked me from behind with a tray. "But maybe Saturdays...." I said.

So it was settled: an hour, cleaning up, Saturday afternoons, when I could. The old woman departed. Her job was indeed done. Reverend Ferry taught me the procedure for mopping the dining room floor.

And that is how I got there. I moved in with my new friends during the weekend of hurricane Gloria. My last act in the old apartment was to tape big Xs across the windows to keep them from shattering in the wind. Then I walked across the Green to Wooster Square, so I wouldn't have to stay alone during the storm. Gloria proved tame, but I never once regretted the move.

As for the old woman, I puzzled awhile over what might have happened to change things for her during those weeks I had stayed away. I believe she must have finally settled out of court for the accident, because a month ago she had the hip surgery which she could not have otherwise afforded. She looked rested and well cared-for in the hospital, and made me a little squeamish by showing me her scar, long and neat as the zipper on a suitcase. Somebody had brought her a copy of the *National Enquirer*. "You get started on these stories," she said, "and half an hour goes by before you know it."

"My mother used to buy them on the sly," I said.

"You kids probably read them yourselves."

"Better believe it," I said, "but we'd show her no mercy, so she'd hide them. One time my college roommate was visiting, a real prig, and he sat in the wrong spot on the couch—the cushion

slipped out from under him, and he landed on his butt on the floor with a dozen tabloids."

Our laughter resounded profanely down the geriatric corridor. By the door of her room was a new pushcart, already packed with the take-homes of a hospital stay, the slippers they give you and such. On the stool by the bed were a pair of men's unpolished oxfords—hers. Maybe now she'll get the orthopedic shoes. □

Carol Miller **Hypochondria**

The instruments
intrigue you;
cold metal that
pries and probes.
The bright lights
do not
frighten you,
they are like
moons, or
jolly Gods.

You just want
someone who'll
listen, and
touch. You don't
ask much:
a couple of
taps on the knee,
a stethoscope
on the breast.

Your visits
are very
necessary.
Listening to your
articulate heart,
the doctor writes
Fever on your
chart. You
ask him to
open his
mouth and say
"Awe."

THE CHURCHES THAT WOULD NOT DIE

VICTORY & STRUGGLE IN EASTERN EUROPE

PEADAR KIRBY
BORYS A. GUDZIAK
JANICE BROWN

East Germany

While the churches' key role in East Germany's revolution last autumn is universally recognized here, church leaders are well aware that they now face new challenges in adapting to a pluralistic society.

Bishop Gottfried Forck of the Lutheran church of Berlin-Brandenburg acknowledges that it was relatively easy in the past for the church to know what position to take. Christians could not become officers in the army nor were there Christians in the government. Now, however, he told me, with Christians in government, "It won't be as simple as it was before."

But the roots of the churches' stand go much deeper. Since the early 1980s, Lutheran churches (of which some half of the GDR's 16 million people are members) had been providing the only meeting places where people could gather to discuss the social issues that troubled them. Out of these grew the East bloc's only independent peace movement with its biblical slogan, "Swords into ploughshares." By the late '80s other issues, such as environmental destruction and human rights abuses by the regime, were also being addressed. In these movements lie the roots of the peaceful revolution that swept what seemed to be such an entrenched Communist leadership from power.

For Carl Ordnung, a Methodist lay preacher and head of the Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) peace and security department, what the church offered was its insistence on nonviolent methods of protest. The huge marches, particularly in Leipzig, that brought the crisis to a head last October began from churches where participants had been urged not to provoke the police.

In East Berlin, Bishop Forck had attended protest prayer services in the Gethsemane Church and, addressing police chiefs present, had urged them not to incite the demonstrators. His intervention is seen as having been very important in preventing violence, particularly on the evening of October 7, 1989. Two anniversaries fell on that day, both of which made the police tense. One was the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, with foreign Communist leaders, including Mikhail Gorbachev, in attendance; the other was the anniversary of local elections in which, according to citizens' groups, the government had issued fraudulent returns. On the seventh day of each subsequent month, protests

had taken place against this alleged fraud, protests which the security forces clamped down on with severity.

But Bishop Forck's role was more important than simply intervening to protect protesters. He had given his personal backing to the more activist role being played by pastors and church groups in the GDR over the last decade, a role that had drawn opposition from more conservative pastors and congregations. The bishop's stand had also invited attention from state security, the dreaded Stasi. In a recently published book reproducing Stasi files for the period of January to November 1989, there is a revealing entry for Sunday, May 7, a local election polling day: "At the majority of Sunday services, the sermon didn't refer to the elections; but in Berlin Marienkirche, Bishop Forck did. He stressed that the people should resist their dependence on the state, that they are not free to speak and to check out the accuracy of government statements. Only by being able to do this is social change possible in this country."

If the Lutheran church played a crucial role in bringing about change in East German society, the same cannot be said about the Catholic church. Many who praised the Lutherans' role (and I heard nothing but praise for it) were critical of the Catholic leadership for standing aloof, though it is acknowledged that many lay Catholics were active.

Monsignor Karl-Heinz Ducke, assistant general secretary to the Berlin bishops' conference, explained to me that the Catholic church has never had firm roots in this part of Germany where it has been a small minority since Reformation times, numbering now about one million people. He pointed out that some of these are Poles and Czechs, giving the Catholic church an interest "in the European role of the GDR and not just in relations with the federal republic." Unlike the Lutheran churches, which set up their own GDR federation in 1969 and split with the West German churches, the Catholic church never recognized the East German state. Thus almost all its dioceses straddle the border and it has only two bishops resident in the GDR, in Dresden and Berlin. Recent ecumenical developments have, however, drawn the Catholic church more into the life of the GDR. In preparation for international assemblies on peace, justice, and the integrity of creation in Basle and Seoul, three ecumenical assemblies were held in the GDR which, Bishop Forck told me, drew the Catholic, Free, and Lutheran churches into "intimate contact."

A practical expression of this new cooperation came following

the autumn revolution when permanent Round Table discussions between representatives of all political parties were established. Bishop Forck was asked to provide independent moderators from the church. He agreed, but only on condition that this would be done on an ecumenical basis.

Another result of this ecumenical process was the emergence of leaders, some of whom have now achieved national prominence. The Lutheran pastor, Markus Meckel, has become leader of the Social Democratic party (SPD) and foreign minister in the new East German government. He is one of four pastors in the government. The best-known internationally is Rainer Eppelmann, head of the small Democratic Awakening party. When I met him in East Berlin in 1982 (as leader of the underground peace movement), he was one of the GDR's best known dissidents. The irony of his new position cannot be lost on his former persecutors: he is minister for defense and disarmament.

Attitudes are divided on the active political role taken on by many pastors. Monsignor Duche listed nine pastors who sat at the Round Table as representatives of political parties, but thought the involvement of the clergy in politics was a bad thing. Bishop Forck, however, was more positive. "Pastors have the trust of the people and are accustomed to public speaking," he told me. "After all, the job of the pastor is not just to pray, to educate, or to bury the dead." Those active in politics have taken leaves of absence from their church duties and will have to choose one or the other, he said.

All this serves to underline the challenges now facing the churches. If they won a new credibility among the general population through helping the growth of opposition groups, these groups no longer need the "space" and protection provided by churches. But how are the churches to build on this credibility, on the fact that, as Bishop Forck put it to me, "the church's voice is listened to much more here than it is in the federal republic"?

The bishop has his own vision of the challenge ahead: "The church must be for the disadvantaged and the weak and this is going to involve different groups than before." One example he mentioned is former Stasi members, now subject to public hostility. He was on the three-person commission set up to oversee the disbandment of the Stasi. Another is the former Communist leader, Erich Honecker, currently living with a Lutheran pastor in a village just outside Berlin. Bishop Forck revealed that he had four times refused to allow the former leader to reside on church property but when Honecker's lawyers said his life couldn't be guaranteed, the bishop relented. Through caring for such people, Forck added, "we are not going to make ourselves popular." Monsignor Duche agrees. "To give a chance of building a new society, we have to tell people to remember the past but not to be vengeful."

Marianne Birthler, a member of parliament and a teacher/catechist employed by the Lutheran church, told me that the legacy of the church being forced to take up social questions was to politicize it. While she fears the pressure now to return to a purely spiritual role, she believes that many church people continue to see a political role for the church.

Carol Ordnung predicts that "attendance at normal church

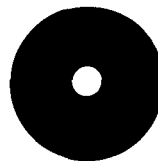
services will decrease because the churches no longer play a political role." But he sees a prophetic role in "attempting to create an alternative to Western society, for example through openness to one's neighbor, through stressing solidarity."

Bishop Forck concludes on a somewhat sober note: "My hope for the future is for a church that doesn't live off being popular but tries to be faithful to Jesus Christ. This will cause us trouble; it will mean we will not always be loved."

PEADAR KIRBY

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Ukraine



On December 1 of last year the president of the Soviet Union was received by the head of state of the Vatican. In the persons of the world's two most influential Slavs, different and opposing ideological, cultural, religious, and ethnic worlds encountered each other. The meeting was heralded as the beginning of a new age in Soviet-Catholic relations. Mikhail Gorbachev promised Pope John Paul II that the status of the Catholic church in the Soviet Union would be "normalized." Among the outstanding issues brought up by the pope was the case of the Ukrainian Catholic church. Forced underground in 1946 after Stalin's attempt to liquidate it, this body of four to five million Catholic believers constitutes the largest of the Eastern or Byzantine Rite churches in the Catholic communion. On the eve of the Roman encounter officials of the government Council for Religious Affairs in Kiev, the capital of the Ukrainian SSR, announced that after almost half a century of brutal repression, Ukrainian Catholics would be permitted to petition for the registration of individual parish communities. To many observers and policymakers it seemed that finally the life of Ukrainian Catholic bishops, clergy, religious, and faithful would in fact be normalized.

It was in March of 1946, after the imprisonment of the entire Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy, that a noncanonical synod of terrorized Ukrainian Catholic clergy and laity (no bishops) was convened at the behest of the NKVD, the predecessor of the KGB. Under the supervision of state authorities and the presidency of two bishops of the Russian Orthodox church, the Ukrainian Catholic church was unanimously declared "self-liquidated" and "reunited" with the Russian Orthodox church. Clergy and faithful refusing to heed NKVD persuasion and subscribe to the decisions of the noncanonical synod followed their bishops into prisons, labor camps, and Siberian exile. Tens of thousands, including all but one of the bishops, did not survive the ordeal. All of the Ukrainian Catholic churches, monasteries, and ecclesiastical institutions—the seminaries, schools, publishing houses, orphanages, and hospitals—were handed over by the government to the Russian Orthodox church, confiscated outright, or simply closed.

Against all odds, the resolve of the Ukrainian Catholics was



sustained throughout the half-century saga of suffering. Those priests who were released from captivity or exile were systematically persecuted. Despite physical assaults, constant surveillance, fines and/or imprisonment, the underground bishops, priests, and religious continued to minister clandestinely to their flock. Priests' homes were periodically searched, religious books and liturgical vestments were confiscated. Their families were harassed, their children became victims of psychological intimidation in school and in the mandatory Communist youth organization, and were later submitted to institutional discrimination in the work place. It is no small wonder that the Ukrainian Catholic church has survived this systematic campaign of annihilation. Today it emerges from the underground with a hierarchy, new generations of priests educated in clandestine seminaries, and an energetic laity. Having taken the narrow path, it is an authoritative moral and spiritual force in Ukrainian society. For this reason Soviet governmental authorities are developing new ways of combating this community, while not abandoning all previous strategy.

Perestroika has done away with the most egregious forms of persecution and the late-November announcement from Kiev gave rise to hopes for the rehabilitation of Ukrainian Catholics, the real legalization of the Ukrainian Catholic church, and the restitution of its property. Events of recent months, however, have been disappointing. Physical attacks on Ukrainian Catholic clergy and faithful have not ceased. On January 31 in the village of Stariava, Mostysk Region, Ivan Hel, head of the Committee for the Defense of the Ukrainian Catholic church, and the Rev. Petro Zeleniukh were dragged from their car and severely beaten. Bishops Pavlo Vasylyk and Filemon Kurchabar, auxiliaries of Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk respectively, have documented numerous attacks on their priests.

While the harassment and violence continue, almost nothing is being done to address the consequences of the injustices of 1946. Registration of Ukrainian Catholic parishes has been a sham. As of mid-April, five months after the November announcement, out of approximately 800 applications submitted in western Ukraine, 26 have been reviewed in Kiev, and a grand total of 7 parishes have been registered in Moscow. Bureaucratic obstacles have been uniquely tailored to undermine the Ukrainian Catholic resurgence. (One needs only to recall that over approximately a twelve-month period in 1988-1989 more than one thou-

sand Russian Orthodox parishes were registered in western Ukraine.) At the present rate, it will take another fifty years to register just those Ukrainian Catholic communities which have emerged from clandestinity. While the opening of parishes has been given lip service, absolutely nothing has been done to return to the Ukrainian Catholic church any of the ecclesiastical institutions (seminaries, schools, etc.) necessary for the functioning of normal ecclesiastical life.

Even the Russian Orthodox have raised their voices in protest. According to Father Georgii Edelstein, a member of the reform movement *Perestroika* and the Church and a Russian Orthodox priest, the government hastened the registration of these Russian Orthodox parishes in western Ukraine not to meet the needs of what is in fact a small Orthodox population, but to preempt the registration of Ukrainian Catholic parishes and to mislead Western opinion. The government is now trying to frame the issue in terms of interconfessional rivalry, claiming that Ukrainian Catholics should settle the matter of church buildings with the Orthodox. It is, however, the state, as sole proprietor of religious edifices according to Soviet law, that determines whether a community can lease a particular church edifice.

When local government officials have made decisions addressing injustices of the past, they have been rescinded by central authorities. On April 6, the newly elected city council of Lviv, dominated by members of the Ukrainian democratic front called Rukh ("the movement"), had voted 124 to 6 that St. George's Cathedral, the most symbolic shrine of the Ukrainian Catholic church, should be returned for use to its rightful owners in time for Easter. Subsequently, however, the president of the Ukrainian Republic, Shevchenko, declared the Lviv city council's resolution null and void, apparently with direct authorization from Gorbachev, who was using his new presidential powers.

Soviet PR specialists have been clouding the issue of persecuted churches by casting the government as mediator and peacemaker between opposing denominations when in reality the government is the cause of the suffering and tension. This smoke screen has had some success in the Soviet Union, but even more so in the West. Thus the *National Catholic Register*, by no means unsympathetic to the plight of the Ukrainian Catholic church, called the permission to register parishes a "relegalization" of the Ukrainian Catholic church. The point of the matter is that the church as a whole is not a juridical person and has no legal rights to operate any ecclesiastical institutions. Furthermore, no steps have been taken to renounce the acts of 1945-46 which stripped the church of its juridical status and sent it into the underground. In Soviet parlance, the Ukrainian Catholic church has not been rehabilitated.

This state of affairs is troubling in itself and in light of broader processes. The recognition of the basic liberties of Ukrainian Catholics, a veritable minority, is an elementary task, the completion of which would not threaten the stability of the Soviet Union. And yet, President Gorbachev's solemn promise of December to normalize the status of Ukrainian Catholics remains unfulfilled. Gorbachev's stance on minority issues such as the religious rights of Ukrainian Catholics and the national aspirations of a few million Balts are a revealing gauge of his vision and

intentions. A *perestroika* built on broken promises, betrayed trust, and a neglect of basic human liberties will not bring the Soviet Union out of its vertiginous social, economic, environmental, and ethnic crisis. The moral and existential deprivation of Soviet citizens is a central cause of the tensions and dilemmas plaguing Soviet society. Americans will be well advised to analyze and question the shaky foundation being laid for the restructured Soviet Union. The time has not passed for the advocacy of fundamental human principles which must be the building blocks of any just and productive society.

Moreover, American policymakers need to stay well informed on these issues and the facts, as they now stand, are as follows: the kangaroo synod of 1946, organized by the state, has not been denounced by the state; the Cathedral of St. George is closed and a decision taken to return it was rescinded on orders from Moscow; for a church of four to five million, seven parishes have been registered; violence and harassment continue; according to Soviet law there is no guarantee of fundamental liberties of expression and conscience as they have come to be understood in the Judeo-Christian world. For Ukrainian Catholics, "normalization" is no closer than it was six months ago. And yet the dramatic revival of the Ukrainian Catholic church vividly illustrates that the quest for the spiritual cannot be repressed by any means, be they brutal or bureaucratic.

BORYS A. GUDZIAK

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Romania

Few Romanian intellectuals enjoy a better reputation with ordinary Romanians than the slight, sixty-year-old Doina Cornea. A lecturer at the University of Cluj, she was dismissed in 1983 for "corrupting" the students; she had addressed petition after petition to President Nicolae Ceausescu denouncing his policies, particularly his plan for the "systematization" of Romania's villages (see Thomas Swick, "Romania, Romania," *Commonweal*, May 5, 1989). For the last two years of the Ceausescu regime, Cornea lived under house arrest. She was not allowed outside without Securitate guards, was beaten and threatened with death, and her visitors were intimidated and turned away, including the British ambassador. People came to call her the Transylvanian Joan of Arc.

Cornea is a member of the Romanian Eastern Rite Catholic church, a church whose forty-year suppression under communism has many parallels with that of the Ukrainian Catholic church. The Romanian Eastern Rite church originated in 1698 among poverty-stricken Orthodox peasants who were pressured by their new ruler, the proselytizing Austrian Emperor Leopold, to become Catholics. They were allowed to retain their Orthodox ritual and married priesthood. Later, many of these converts reverted to Orthodoxy. But, crucially for Romania's history, a number

of young Catholics sent to Rome for study rediscovered there the Latin roots of their nation's language and origins. As Cornea wrote Pope John Paul II in December 1988, in a letter protesting Ceausescu's latest attempts to suppress the church: "It played a vital cultural role in our history.... It led to the awakening of our national consciousness."

Soon after the emergence of modern Romania in 1918, the Romanian Catholic church was honored in the new constitution as "Romania's second church." For a time, relations on a grass-roots level between the Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholics were excellent; frequent intermarriage caused few problems. But following World War II, the Orthodox leader, Patriarch Justinian, collaborated with the Communist government in reabsorbing the church into the Orthodox fold, and a canonically invalid Eastern Rite Catholic synod in 1948 requested reunion. Those who resisted—six hundred priests and religious, five thousand lay people, and all six of the church's bishops—were imprisoned. All but one of the bishops, Julius Hossu, died there. Two years before his death in 1970, Hossu was secretly named the first Romanian cardinal.

Most priests and lay people were forced to join the Orthodox church, but continued to worship with nearly the same ritual and in the same church buildings as before. In addition, a catcomb church existed, led by secretly consecrated bishops who applied repeatedly for the restitution of their church, and who suffered constant intimidation from the Securitate. In 1969 the Vatican made matters easier for Eastern Rite Catholics, issuing instructions that allowed them to receive the sacraments in the Orthodox churches, and even to marry in Orthodox churches if this did not cause scandal and if they did not abandon the faith. These regulations applied wherever there was no Western Rite church within six miles.

During all this time a nucleus of Eastern Rite priests celebrated the liturgy in homes, to which the authorities increasingly turned a blind eye, provided only family and friends were present. A German Jesuit who in 1978 met the former underground bishop of Maramures, Ion Dragomir, reports that in that diocese alone there were 450 priests working secretly, 146 of them ordained by Dragomir. The government, although officially contending that all Eastern Rite Catholics had been successfully integrated into the Orthodox church, eventually gave up hope of pressuring Catholics to do so. But it continued to resort to other maneuvers to undermine resistance, encouraging Eastern Rite Catholics to attend Western Rite churches and to demand Mass in Romanian. This happened particularly in Transylvania, where most Western Rite Catholics are Hungarian-speaking, or, to a lesser extent, German-speaking. (Over the last decade, some fifty thousand Romanian-speaking Western Rite Catholics were moved from the eastern province of Moldavia to work in Transylvania's industrial centers. Most German, and some Hungarian, priests provided a Romanian Mass for them. However, with their own national identity under attack in the last two years, most Hungarian parishes stopped this practice, causing some resentment.)

In her letter to the pope, Cornea denounced the policy as a ploy to split the Catholic church. She pointed out that Eastern

Rite Catholics did not want to be forced into a church with an alien rite. It was precisely because her church had kept alive faith, courage, and a cultural tradition incompatible with state control that the government wanted to eliminate it, she wrote.

Following last December's revolution, one of the first acts of the newly formed National Salvation Front was to annul the decree outlawing the church. The church's bishops emerged from the catacombs to participate in the first episcopal conference in Romania in forty years, representing a church of about two-and-a-half-million persons with six hundred priests. However, as in most other aspects of its policy, the provisional government's concessions were partial. Incapable of shaking off the Communist past of its most powerful members, the Front did not grant immediate legal recognition to the church. This would be given only after the bishops had presented a charter testifying to the validity of their ecclesiastical standing. It was back to the 1948 situation when the government had demanded charters from all denominations as a prerequisite for their official recognition—a demand with which both branches of the Catholic church had refused to comply. Without state recognition a church cannot legally hold property, have employees, publish books and periodicals, or represent itself in the law courts.

Meanwhile, there is another vexing problem, the restoration of property that had been commandeered by the state and transferred to Orthodox jurisdiction. The Front, eager not to alienate 16 million Orthodox votes in May's elections, opted for the status quo. Together with Orthodox leaders, it discussed restitution in terms of a referendum to be held in each parish. But Metropolitan Alexandur Todea, leader of the Eastern Rite Catholics, found this suggestion unacceptable since Eastern Rite Catholics lack the resources, legal status, and numerical superiority of the Orthodox.

As Cornea foresaw, the machinations of the former regime continue to foment disunity within the nation. Though the Eastern Rite bishops have now taken over the struggle to maintain their church's identity, Cornea's work as a dissident is by no means over. In January, she resigned from the Front, a step followed by other leading dissidents. She explained that she felt the revolution was being betrayed, not least by the Front's decision to compete in May's elections as a political party instead of serving as an all-party interim government. With its control of the media, its funding, and its ability to pressure voters through local workers' councils, the Front was in a singular position in Romania to carry out a large-scale election campaign. Cornea complained early on that the National Liberal party and the National Peasants party, two independent parties which had played a key role in the movement for liberation, were being marginalized. The outcome of May's elections as well as last month's bitter repression of dissidents bear out her concerns. For those Romanians for whom communism has been such a devastating experience, the thought of its continuance on Romanian soil is abhorrent. "Only a magnanimous and disinterested group can have any hope of winning the trust and sympathy of our people," says Cornea. Romania's struggle is far from over. JANICE BROWN

Janice Brown is Eastern Europe correspondent for News Network International.

SCREEN

DEATH IN A TIME OF AIDS

RENE'S 'LONGTIME COMPANION'

In life, a dying person deserves our sympathy simply because he or she shares our humanity. But when a fictional character has been sentenced to death by its creator, we in the audience are entitled to ask, "Why should we be moved by the fate of this particular phantasm on whom the author inflicts imagined death?" Of course, we ask this question only when we are not moved. If we are moved, it is usually because the pain inflicted on the character both distills and heightens those qualities that were already interesting before misfortune struck. What doesn't touch the heart is the death of a character who was created only to die, whose appearance in a drama immediately heralds his or her removal.

Some critics and audience members have found *Longtime Companion* bland while others have written and spoken of it as an intensely moving experience. In fact, this movie about a group of homosexual friends devastated and reduced by AIDS, is partly moving and partly bland. And it's not difficult to distinguish which parts work and which don't. All the scenes that deal with the middle-aged couple, Sean and David, are intensely moving. They show the deterioration and disappearance of two men whose presences on screen were poignantly real to us long before they were stricken. Furthermore, their fates display both the greatness and the puniness of human character under the shadow of death. All the other characters lack this reality. They are mere constructions, in fact, not characters, strenuously willed onto the screen to illustrate aspects of the AIDS crisis. Hence, the complaints of blandness.

Sean, a television writer of soap operas, is the sort of man who, as a child, was labeled "artistic" by perplexed and contemptuous adults. Nervous, tending to hysterics, perhaps more than a bit paranoid in the best of times, he has become facile and disciplined enough to be able to thrive in a field in which facility and discipline are valued more than talent. Yet he has enough of an artist's pride in his work to assure friends watching an episode he has written that an actress's corny exit line—"I'll leave you two in your little love nest"—is the performer's invention, not his. "I would never have written 'love nest,'" he sniffs.

The suspicion of AIDS at first aggravates Sean's natural hypersensitivity, making him worry about moles on his neck that have always been there, causing him to flare up at David, turning him teary-eyed and sulky. Later, as the disease actually takes hold and friends comfort and support him, Sean becomes calmer, almost resigned, quite tolerant of the psychobabble offered by a sincere but silly acquaintance. Then, horribly, the later stages of his illness make him prematurely senile and, finally, beyond any communication save David's almost motherly crooning and caressing.

Mark Lamos, a superb stage director and experienced stage

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actor, has a wonderful screen debut as Sean. First he captures Sean's darting sensibility, then he shows the man's mind dying at nearly the same rate as his body. In one scene, Sean, his face acquiescent, friendly, and dim under the peak of a baseball cap, tries, with David's help, to have a professional exchange on the phone with a TV producer, without revealing the nature of his illness. The terrible comedy Lamos finds in this scene would not be out of place in a Beckett play. The entire performance is a life-enhancing evocation of a life dwindling into nothingness.

Bruce Davison, as David, finally has a role worthy of his talent. He makes David elegantly campy, wittily fey. When David becomes Sean's mainstay, the feyness doesn't disappear or unrealistically turn into a pillar-of-strength sobriety. No, David's almost ethereal daffiness grows, billows, serves as a self-administered tonic to keep himself going and as a balm with which he soothes his friend and eases him toward death. One of Davison's boldest strokes is to keep his voice high and flutey even in the most heartbreaking scene in the movie: Sean's death, the only successful deathbed scene since Garbo's Camille. Davison uses a touch of effeminacy to garnish his characterization, bringing out the full flavor of David's strength and gallantry. He's catchy the way a tune is catchy. We want to hear his voice say certain lines over and over. And he's heroic. We want to emulate his quiet strength. Ironically, David, the leisure-loving, flippant, part-time drag queen is the latest avatar of that grace-under-pressure defined and exalted by the most notorious of homophobes, Hemingway. *Pace, Papa.*

Scriptwriter Craig Lucas is a conscientious dramatist who strives to show the growth of all his characters as AIDS changes their lives. But, whereas the changes in Sean and David seem to come out of mysterious depths that death has stirred, the younger characters might as well be wearing tags announcing their didactic functions. Willy is the Victim of Paranoia who fears even to touch one of his ailing friends for fear of infection. Naturally, his better nature (or one of Dr. Koop's painstakingly sane reports) asserts itself and he becomes a volunteer worker in the homes of AIDS patients, even delivering a speech urging one despondent patient to show a little spunk. Willy's lover, Fuzzy, has a beard which gives him his nickname and which serves him as a characterization. As for *The Actor with Aids* who finds his contract canceled...but why go on? These aren't lives. These are case history folders falling into file drawers.

Even when individual characterizations don't register, director Norman René skillfully deploys his actors in group scenes of partying, lounging, hospital visits, ceremonies. He has a talent for creating seemingly formless compositions that turn out to be dramatically cunning. With his stationary camera set back at a comfortable distance, he evokes relationships through the ways people sit, slouch, stand, or recline near or far from each other, do or don't touch, do or don't include the rest of the group in a remark intended primarily for one person. The way René works, an arm reaching over the back of a couch to touch a shoulder or to clasp a hand can evoke half a lifetime of unstrained affection.

The most surprising thing about *Longtime Companion* is that a harrowing disorder of the body and the body politic has insti-

gated the making of a wistful and, yes, a pleasant movie. David's crooning voice eases not only Sean's death but our own feelings. Is this an unmixed blessing? That a film about men dying in considerable agony is so consistently light may disturb some who reflect upon the movie, but few will be disturbed while actually watching it. *Longtime Companion* is agony wrapped in silk.

RICHARD ALLEVA

STAGE

PLAY IT AGAIN

'PIANO LESSON' & 'SPUNK'

It is unusual for a play to win the Pulitzer Prize before its New York opening, but that is what August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* did. As with the other Wilson plays, it began at the Yale Repertory Theatre and, shepherded by director Lloyd Richards, it made stops around the country before it settled down on Broadway. Another in the series of plays on black Americans in the twentieth century that Wilson has been writing since *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* in 1981, *The Piano Lesson* is set in Pittsburgh in 1936. As one has come to expect from Wilson, he brings together a group of characters who convey (embody) the texture of life—its adhesions, its disruptions—within a family and the black community of which it is a part.

"I am more and more concerned with pointing out the differences between blacks and whites, as opposed to pointing out the similarities," Wilson said in a *New York Times* interview (April 15, 1990). But he does so not by pointing at all. He simply creates a milieu in which his characters can live. If we were to take his statement at face value, we would have to assume that the whites in Wilson's audience come to his plays like tourists, looking at the quaint and unfamiliar life, keeping a tour group's distance.

That is not the case. Phlegmatic uncles like Doaker and flamboyant uncles like Wining Boy are hardly strangers to white families. White preachers can be as warm and as pompous as Avery, and Lymon's mixture of lust and longing for something more substantial is hardly arcane. The voices and the attitudes that give Wilson's plays their richness may be as different as he says they are, but he would not have reached the wide audience he has if his characters and their concerns did not touch something personal in playgoers.

Certainly a conflict between a brother and a sister is familiar ground, although the struggle between Boy Willie and Berniece over the piano is special, since it grows out of the need to sustain—or to reject—a family tradition that includes slavery, violence, and the precariousness of the black presence in the white world. The piano which sits heavily at stage right, a prop and a symbol and a bone of contention, requires much exposition which, for the most part, is kept from smothering the play by being filtered through the apparent random talk that fills the

stage. Carved by the great-grandfather of Willie and Berniece, it is decorated with their own family history although it was done for a slaveowner. Their father finally took the piano and died shortly after in a fire set by revenging whites. Their mother kept it, polished it, had Berniece play it, but since it has come to Berniece she has not touched it. Boy Willie arrives from their old home down South, intent on selling the piano so that he can buy land, and Berniece, who holds onto it but will not use it, is determined to stop him. The house is haunted by Sutter, the white man who wants to recover the piano, and in the end Boy Willie faces him head on, racing upstairs to rout him, and Berniece opens the piano and sings, "Oh, Lord I want you to help me," thus calling up the family to aid Willie. Whether Sutter is a real ghost, as he is to the characters, or a device (to the audience he is never more than a light at the head of the stairs), he reconciles the brother and sister. Boy Willie gives up the piano to Berniece on the condition that she play it, accepting that it is their family with a history that can stay alive only through becoming an active part of their present lives.

This account of the theme and plot of *The Piano Lesson* gives no strong sense of what the play is like. Boy Willie is a hurricane of a character, all mouth and movement, and Charles S. Dutton, who played Levee in *Ma Rainey*, fills the stage with comic frenzy that charms and frightens at the same time. It is a virtuoso performance that makes it difficult for S. Epatha Merkerson to hold the stage. Yet, Boy Willie needs the tight-lipped, closed-in Berniece to set him off, and the two performers complement one another with great effect. The rest of the cast expertly provides the necessary background and ballast for the central conflict, particularly those actors who have been with the play since Yale: Carl Gordon (Doaker), Lou Myers (Wining Boy), Rocky Carroll (Lymon), and Tommy Hollis (Avery).

Spunk is black theater of a very different kind. Based on three tales by Zora Neale Hurston, adapted and directed by George C. Wolfe, *Spunk* is story theater but played with high style and punctuated by the music of Chic Street Man, whose presence—his voice and his guitar—is one of the pleasures of the piece. The title comes not from Hurston's story "Spunk," but from one of the composer's songs. The narrative is delivered by Blues Speak Woman (Ann Duquesnay) and, as usual in story theater, by the performers who will act out the tales. There is a difference in tone, however, for a narrative line can be changed by the person delivering it. When Danitra Vance, as Missie May in "The Gilded Six-Bits," peers around the edge of the cloth that hides her and finishes the description of how beautiful she is in her bath, there is a mixture of impudence and shy self-knowledge—just right for the character—that makes the line funny. There is invention that goes beyond the assigning of lines. In "Sweat," for instance, the three gossiping loafers who comment on the dissolving marriage of Delia and Sykes and the rattlesnake that divorces them are played by two performers and a very impressive lifesize puppet (designed by Barbara Pollitt). Well into the piece the night I saw it, a voice behind me said suddenly, "That's not a real man." Real enough in this context, however, for *Spunk* is as much about the telling of stories as the stories told. One's first impulse is to assume that Wolfe, who wrote the outrageous *The Colored Museum*, is playing games with Hurston as he did with the writers and genres that he parodied in *Museum*. Another look at Hurston, however, indicates that Wolfe is building on the quality already in her stories—a voice that carries a mixture of amusement and affection toward her characters, one that proclaims that Hurston, the story-teller, is never offstage in her tales.

GERALD WEALES

BOOKS

Deeper than sex or politics

The trade of interviewing has many Jacks (and Jills) but few masters, and that's all right in general since most subjects get the interviewers they deserve. But occasionally the skillful prober comes along who unobtrusively elicits answers that surprise even the interviewee or who raises questions that move the conversation onto a new level of discourse. Reading Rosemary Hartill's collection of talks about God and faith with eight (mainly British) contemporary nov-

WRITERS REVEALED

Edited by Rosemary Hartill

Peter Bedrick Books, \$17.95, 144 pp.

John B. Breslin

elists shows us such an interlocutor at work.

The group itself is definitely a mixed bag whose principal common denominator is that they all write novels which explore religious issues and, more immediately, that they seemed apt subjects for a BBC radio

series on writers and their shaping ideas. Four of the eight are quite well known to American readers (and public television viewers): Anthony Burgess, Brian Moore, John Mortimer, Iris Murdoch; two others, of a later generation, have established reputations but less transatlantic visibility (Piers Paul Read and A.N. Wilson); and a final two, one older, one younger, write for a mainly British public (Bernice Rubens and Sara Maitland).

Their range of religious convictions—or even perception—covers as broad a spec-

trum. John Mortimer exhibits a kind of unflappable agnosticism, taking refuge in Graham Greene's favorite image of the mix of faith and doubt (borrowed from Browning): some call the chessboard white, some call it black. Hartill pushes him beyond the tired arguments of theodicy and morality to the Christian concept of grace: "The idea that you are loved (not because of what you do, but that you are loved anyway) and that your life then becomes a response to this." His response to that reveals how little influence the central message of Christianity has had on the minds of otherwise sophisticated and intelligent contemporaries: "Well, I think that's an awfully difficult question which needs an awful lot of thought." Which it certainly hasn't got from John Mortimer.

Dame Iris Murdoch has given the doctrines of Christianity plenty of thought but has ended up with a severely truncated notion of what's involved in being a Christian: no personal God, no divinity of Christ, no afterlife—what she calls "demythologization." Even more curiously, she seems to think St. Paul had the same thing in mind when he spoke of Christ.

For Anthony Burgess, Catholicism has a decidedly gritty quality associated with his working-class upbringing in a Manchester public house; while he shares little else with the upper-class religion of Evelyn Waugh, he, too, seems unable to forgive Rome for what he calls the secularizing reforms of Vatican II. Indeed he even believes that his negative deposition had something to do with blocking the canonization process of John XXIII! What he

salvaged from the wreckage of his own belief is an absolute conviction in the freedom of the will to make moral choices. In this he joins company with Mortimer and, to a lesser degree, Murdoch for whom religious questions reduce quickly to questions of good and evil.

In contrast, A.N. Wilson, Piers Paul Reid, and, especially, Sara Maitland demonstrate a sensitivity to a much wider range of religious experience—aesthetic, psychological, prophetic, and ecstatic as well as ethical. Wilson admits to his own penchant for thinking of religion as primarily an individual experience of God, but he pushes beyond morality to see in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, a demand that we give up our quest for achieving perfection on our own terms, something Tolstoy, for all his passion and brilliance, couldn't comprehend, according to Wilson who has written a biography of him as well as of Walter Scott, John Milton, Hilaire Belloc, and C.S. Lewis. Wilson was for a brief period in his late teens a Roman Catholic, largely due to the influence of Cardinal Newman and his *Apologia*. He has since returned to the Anglican church which he proclaims to love "in all its dotiness and absurdity."

Brian Moore was born a Catholic but professes to have no religious inclinations whatsoever. And yet he is clearly obsessed with religious questions in many of his novels, especially with questions of faith and its loss. That is a theme common to many of these authors for whom the crisis of belief touches the deepest part of the psyche and therefore probes more tellingly than

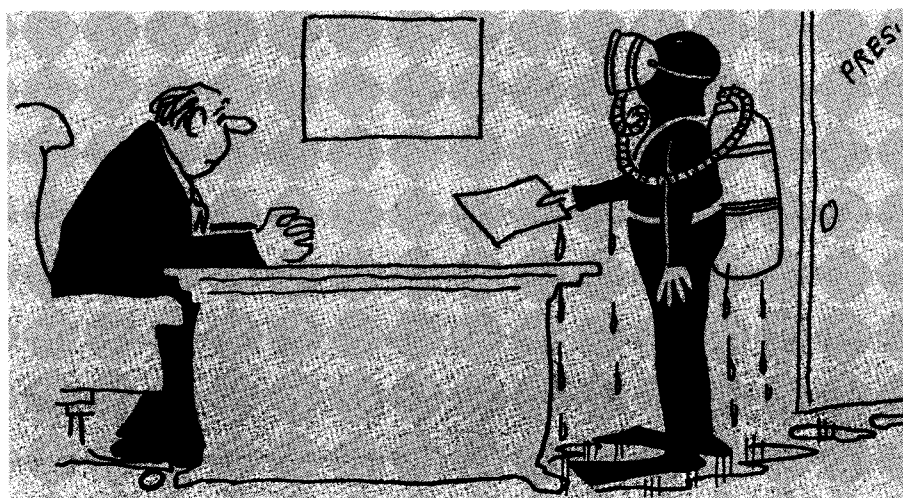
politics or even sex the meaning of human life. Moore remains elusive about his own psyche, but his final sentence on why he writes may hint at the gap novels like *Catholics* or *Cold Heaven* or *Black Robe* are trying to close: "[Novel-writing] is a way of not thinking about what I haven't done with my life."

Moore's agnosticism stands in sharp contrast to the religious experience of a younger and less well known writer whose books I now want very much to read, partly because of a curious coincidence: we may well have shared our tutor two decades ago at Oxford, although we never met. The main reason for my interest, however, is that what Sara Maitland says about Christianity reveals a passionately intelligent believer. This is how Hartill introduces her: "I believe," said Sara Maitland, taking a drag at her cigarette, "in a God who will take risks. I believe in a God who is wild, not tamed."

This is balm in Gilead, indeed, after the careful rationalizing of the preceding interviews. And what follows doesn't disappoint, either. Maitland is a convinced feminist married, paradoxically, to an Anglo-Catholic priest who is opposed in principle to the ordination of women. She became a Christian after leaving Oxford when she realized she couldn't go on talking and thinking about it without making a decision. The idea had become a reality demanding a response.

In her novels she weds this religious faith with her social convictions in ways that link the struggles of contemporary women to the stories of Deborah and Jael in the Book of Judges or Mary and Elizabeth in Luke's Gospel or Teresa of Avila. She wants to get beyond the tamed Christianity of Liberal Protestantism ("ethics tinged with sentiment") to something prophetic and disturbing. Though she doesn't mention Flannery O'Connor, I suspect she would be a fan, as she clearly is of Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* ("a wonderful, wonderful book").

Reading her interview made this whole book worthwhile for me. I am grateful to Rosemary Hartill not only for her generally probing questions and her gracefully relentless pursuit of elusive game, but especially for introducing me to a contemporary writer I might otherwise have missed. □



"I think I've found the bottom line, sir!"

WERFEL DISCOVERED

FRANZ WERFEL

A Life in Prague, Vienna, and Hollywood
Peter Stephan Jungk

Grove Weidenfeld, \$24.95, 318 pp.

Crystal Gromer

In the autumn of 1919, Franz Werfel confessed to his future wife, Alma, the widow of Gustav Mahler, the former mistress of Oscar Kokoschka, and at that time the wife of Walter Gropius, "I'm full of mistrust of myself. Want to produce something decisive, at long last. . . . It is terrible! I still haven't written my Op[us]." Werfel was twenty-nine years old.

The mistrust was not merely jejune, but lifelong—a condition of Werfel's being. So was the indecision, and so was the longing. Imbued from his childhood with a love of music, in particular a love of opera—and especially Verdi, about whom he wrote a novel—Werfel thought in terms of opuses, not books. He wrote huge books, at which he labored eight and twelve hours a day, producing in months manuscripts of eight hundred to a thousand pages, which he then fell to revising at the same rate. When he did write an occasional brief work, such as the critically and popularly successful novella, *The Man Who Conquered Death*, he urged his publisher to print the book on thick stock and to use large print, lest his public think the book merely a "stop-gap." It is not surprising that Werfel's favorite contemporary American author was Thomas Wolfe, and a reader of Peter Stephan Jungk's excellent biography can't help but wonder if Werfel's place in twentieth-century German literature isn't somewhat analogous to Wolfe's place in American literature. Both men produced enormous volumes—in their time successful, in our time no longer read.

Jungk's biography of Werfel, published in Germany in 1987 and recently, apparently seamlessly, translated into English

by Anselm Hollo, provides a carefully detailed portrait of a man whose life story was a struggle between antitheses, between identities. "A fat, bow-legged Jew" was his anti-Semitic wife's first impression of Franz Werfel; "a friend God has sent" was the accolade of the Armenian community after *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, in which Werfel recorded the extermination of the Armenians by the Turks during World War I; a convert? the Catholic archbishop of New Orleans inquired after the enormous, indeed astounding, success of Werfel's *The Song of Bernadette*, whose film adaptation made an Oscar-winning star of Jennifer Jones, her portrait of Bernadette reproduced in a Norman Rockwell poster and in a soap figurine distributed by a manufacturer in Alabama. In the United States, Werfel became a Book-of-the-Month Club author and a best seller; in 1944 the army bought fifty thousand copies of *The Song of Bernadette*, which sold a million copies that year. The *San Francisco Herald Examiner* serialized it as a daily comic strip.

From the moment of his birth, at just before midnight on September 10, 1890, until the moment of his death, at a few minutes before six in the evening on August 26, 1945, Werfel was caught between worlds: he was born in Prague, but he was not a Czech, his ancestry being German; he was born a Jew, but his beloved nursemaid, Babi, took him to Mass at St. Heinrich's so regularly that he played Mass in his bedroom with brooms, hatboxes, newspapers to make up the altar, beginning a lifetime's fascination with Catholicism—though he was never a Catholic. Even in death, it is not clear whether Alma Mahler had a "baptism" performed on Werfel, causing the priest to be so late for the funeral that after Bruno Walter played Bach and Schubert, Lotte Lehmann sang songs of Schubert twice. Such contradictions ran through Werfel's nature and his experience, but he lived in a time and a place that could not allow their embrace, as his childhood

hero Walt Whitman was allowed the embrace, even the exaltation, of contradiction. Forced to take sides in the exigencies of the German intellectual world and the German political condition of the thirties, Werfel skirted into religious mysticism and political naiveté. He declared his Jewishness openly at the same time that he petitioned for membership in the Reich Association for German Writers.

"I believe I would be happiest in a world that . . . comes closest to the period of primitive Christianity. Then, Jewish and Catholic ethics were joined in one wonderful idea," Werfel said to a reporter in 1930. Though he sought it in work after work, that idea—and perhaps consequently that happiness as well—eluded him. Because the world he lived in was divisive rather than cohesive, because his works were variously confiscated, banned, and, together with the works of Freud and Marx, burned for their "un-German spirit," Werfel found himself as a German author "suspended in empty space." Hence he was still searching for that "one wonderful idea" when, in ill-health and amid premonitions of his death, he undertook his last work, a "travel novel" set a hundred millennia in the future whose hero, F.W., wanders out of death and into a utopia in which only two certainties have been carried over from the world he knew in 1943: Judaism and Catholicism, "two antitheses that had to fight to a finish because they were really two identities."

From Prague to Vienna to Hollywood, via Berlin, Venice, Sanary-sur-Mer, this is a fascinating life, which touches many fascinating lives, for Werfel knew every-



body, and if he didn't, Alma Mahler did. Jungk tells the story of it both well and carefully. It is a gripping story, which includes an arduous escape from occupied France over the Pyrenees to Spain and finally to New York, where Werfel had a couple of months before been reported as dead on the front page of the *Post*—shot while attempting to escape the Nazis, as he might well have been. The book is rewardingly well-researched: passages from unpublished letters, notebooks, journals enliven the text with a sense of the present—and the presence—of the many contemporaries cited. The Notes contain treasures, including Milan Kundera's sympathetic judgment on Werfel's political naiveté.

Most of all, the biography benefits from the decision Jungk made to tell Werfel's story both from the inside and from the outside. Thus we have the story of Werfel from his birth to his death, recorded compassionately but not uncritically, and at the same time, we have the story of Jungk's finding the story. Each chapter ends with a brief italicized passage in which Jungk accounts for his method, whether interview or archive. Each chapter, then, ends in a coda of aged voices recalling a time fifty or more years before. A glance at Jungk's acknowledgments shows that he was indeed blessed or lucky in finding a number of long-lived friends, relatives, acquaintances of Werfel's, the foremost among them Anna Mahler, Werfel's stepdaughter, her husband, Albrecht Joseph, Werfel's secretary, and Golo Mann, the son of Thomas Mann, and with his uncle, Heinrich, a fellow adventurer with the Werfels over the Pyrenees in 1940. Richly, and not always on the same key or with the same facts, the voices of the past chime in; Werfel might well have been pleased by the operatic sense of so many voices making one production. □

REVIEWERS

JOHN B. BRESLIN, S.J., is director of Georgetown University Press and the editor of the short story anthology, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* (Doubleday).

CRYSTAL GROMER teaches humanities at Vermont Technical College.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 402)

To understand our brief, one must understand the legal result that is sought in this case. Her parents are not arguing in their own name in an effort to vindicate their own constitutional rights and interests. Rather, they are arguing in the name of their daughter. In order to overturn the public policy of the state, which is carefully crafted and requires a balance of various factors before a termination decision can be implemented, they contend for a principle which admits of no exceptions. In future applications, such a rule would dictate that the choices of one person should be given primacy over the views of other family members, the medical community, other persons in relationships with that person, and other interests, including the interest in life. In other words, it would set all persons as law unto themselves against all other interests, including any express or implied consideration of the common good. This is not a result which is likely, in our judgment, to result in favorable legal or social developments for the country.

Thus, on a difficult personal and painful question, which admits of a debatable answer, we concluded that the better public policy view, and indeed the better constitutional view, was to argue against the precise jurisprudential result urged by Nancy Cruzan's parents. It would have been useful if the articles in *Commonweal* had conveyed the same sense of concern and sensitivity, and a basic understanding of constitutional jurisprudence.

MARK E. CHOPKO

The writer is general counsel for the United States Catholic Conference.

The author replies:

Mark Chopko criticizes me for not doing what I had no intention of doing, namely, of writing a legal brief responding to the one he filed on behalf of the U.S.C.C. My intent was, rather, to ask *why* (as opposed to *how*) the bishops argue as they do; why they opposed the termination of medical treatment that serves to keep Nancy Cruzan physiologically alive but that can never

restore her to consciousness. As my article demonstrated, the bishops were not compelled to adopt this position out of fidelity to Catholic medical ethics. What, then, were their reasons?

In his response, General Counsel Chopko appears to be contending that the question need not be asked. After conceding that artificial delivery of nourishment may properly be suspended in cases where such treatment "is overly burdensome and painful to the patient or *plainly useless*" [my emphasis], he seizes on my mistaken reference to the "removal" of Nancy Cruzan's gastrostomy tube in an effort to show that I've got the issues wrong. But whether the tube is removed or left in place does not remotely touch upon the central question: whether this equipment should be used to supply nourishment. Such treatment, the Missouri court said (and Counsel Chopko appears to agree), is not useless since it maintains a life. In the view of the medical and ethical authorities I cited, however, the treatment does not serve a useful medical or human purpose. Nancy Cruzan's capacity for living a human life has been destroyed (not merely impaired); neither this nor any other treatment can make her capable even of sense perception (not to speak of higher functions). Given the state of the ethical question, it was not incumbent upon the bishops to insist that her treatment be continued.

The rest of Counsel Chopko's letter—his lecture on the constitutional aspects of the case—confirms my belief that the bishops adopted the position taken in their brief not on the merits of the case at hand but out of a fear that the Supreme Court's decision in *Cruzan v. Hanson* might solidify or extend the exaggerated and unbalanced emphasis on privacy rights contained in (or read into) its *Roe v. Wade* decision. Note in particular the language of Attorney Chopko's penultimate paragraph, where he describes "the legal result sought in this case." Here as elsewhere he fails to mention that, regardless of any arguments made by any other parties to the case, the bishops did not have to rise above the sufferings of the Cruzans and others similarly situated in order to warn the Court against translating privacy rights into a doctrine of complete personal autonomy. Instead of implicitly conflating the interests of fetal life with

the radically different interests of PVS patients, they could have argued for a decision reflecting the circumstances of this case, recognizing the rights and interests of all concerned (including the state's interest in protecting life), and requiring state regulation of the procedures to be followed in cases raising the possibility of a decision to terminate treatment. Had they done so, they would have more truly served as friends of the Court and faithful exponents of the Catholic moral tradition; and, in my

view, they would have been more persuasive.

KEVIN P. QUINN, S.J.

Author's query

Great Neck, N.Y.

To the Editors: For a biography of Daniel Berrigan, S.J., I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has recollections, memorabilia, letters, etc., relating to his life and experiences. The address is 50-10 Concord Avenue, Great Neck, N.Y., 11020.

MURRAY POLNER

Bloodlust & bias

Hollywood, Calif.

To the Editors: It is a sad state of affairs when the bloodlust for a fallen hero extends to the point that *Commonweal* seeks out disillusioned former volunteers to vent their political agendas, with self-righteous disregard for the truth, in "The Paradoxes of Covenant House."

Since the lengthy Redmond attack was so one-sided, received such extensive play in *Commonweal*, and was the basis for an editorial, it is blatantly unfair that equal space is not given to alternate, more qualified viewpoints. I was asked to cut my one-page [1,300-word] response to a mere 500 words, and could barely scratch the surface even in the original. The bias is accentuated by the Redmonds' personal friendship with Frank Macchiarola, the person who protected his political interests by betraying Covenant House in fear of embarrassment after he failed so badly as interim president that the [Covenant House] board asked for his resignation.

The Redmond article is full of distortions and outright falsehoods. It reflects the narrow view of two young people who came to Covenant House with fuzzy-eyed idealism, discovered human flaws, and turned to the protective haven of self-justifying disillusionment. I, too, came to the faith community as a naive young crusader in 1981, but stayed on to work at bettering Covenant House, instead of writing it off because it wasn't perfect.

What the Redmonds' article misses most strikingly is the core mission of Covenant House. It is primarily a ministry, not a social service agency; concerned more with works of mercy than with institutional social work. Covenant House's history—and its size and growth—have been defined by the constant need to play catch-up with the kids, because Father Bruce wouldn't turn them away. And they keep coming, voting with their feet as to how crucial Covenant House is to them.

It was Father Bruce's arrogance, and vision, and singlemindedness—that kids should not be bought and sold, that there should be a place where they can go—that made Covenant House into an extraordinary place where thousands of kids could get some respite from the streets, and

CORRESPONDENCE

PARADOXES OF COVENANT HOUSE

Focused & convincing

Pasadena, Calif.

To the Editors: No "objective" coverage of the Covenant House scandal could possibly have explained as much as the "subjective" coverage *Commonweal* has offered by finding a sympathetic pair of Covenant House insiders and letting them speak at length on their own. The criticisms are more sincere and more fully informed. The underlying concern is more convincing and more focused. Nothing a reporter could have done—talking to people on "both sides" and stitching excerpts together—would have gone nearly so far as this moving and revealing statement.

JACK MILES

Vicious & evil

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: In their article, Rosanne Haggerty Redmond and Mark Redmond have contributed a vicious attack—filled with inaccuracies and misrepresentations—on Father Bruce Ritter and all aspects of Covenant House. *Commonweal's* lack of initiative in verifying the facts or seeking out an alternative perspective is a classic example of yellow journalism.

I worked at Covenant House as a member of the Covenant House Community and a paid staff member from 1979 through 1985, and witnessed its growth as a haven for troubled youths. This growth was not the result of a "misguided preference for large-scale operations and publicity over

less glamorous alternatives." Rather, it was the result of Father Ritter's unwavering commitment to the cardinal principle of Open Intake. This principle prescribed that no young person asking for help could be turned away. Deplorably, the Redmonds have ignored the centrality of Open Intake to the development of Covenant House programs, and as a result completely distorted the nature of its growth.

This article has painted a picture of Father Ritter and Covenant House full of evil intent and effect. It is the Redmonds' perspective that the good that took place at Covenant House was almost incidental, and its supporters willing dupes. On the contrary, Covenant House, with Father Ritter at its helm, was a place of remarkable good work in which young people were treated with dignity, respect, and love. The institution did not, as is suggested, abandon these basic values; it embraced them. For the Redmonds to characterize Covenant House as ineffectual is contrary to my experience, and contrary to the experience of the kids it has served.

The Redmonds and *Commonweal* have suggested that Covenant House take advantage of Father Ritter's forced resignation as an opportunity for righting its course. In a misguided attempt to salvage its image, Covenant House has sacrificed Father Ritter to the court of public opinion. In so doing it has abandoned the very principles that made Covenant House the unique ministry of which so many of us were proud to be a part.

PAUL A. GUALANO

maybe even turn their lives around.

His imperfections were the strengths that made it possible. His detractors can spout about where he failed, but none have equaled what he has achieved. How easy it is to tear someone down! How tremendously more difficult is the process of creating, and building, and leading.

The hopes of *Commonweal* and the Redmonds that Covenant House will now become a better place are shallow and misguided. Covenant House—and the kids—can only lose from the absence of Father Bruce.

I am leaving after nine years, but in sorrow, not bitterness. I cannot be a party to the repudiation of Father Bruce and his vision that Covenant House now chooses as the means of attempting to survive the half-truths, misrepresentations, and hearsay reported by the mass media. The Redmonds and *Commonweal* now join that regrettable collection of individuals and organizations who, acting on hidden agendas under the guise of constructive commentary, have implicated themselves in a great human injustice and in the destruction of a work of good.

ANNE B. DONAHUE

The writer is executive director of Covenant House California. She served on the board of directors of the faith community in 1982-3, was senior staff attorney from 1982-6, and founded the Covenant House street outreach vans.

Distorted & false

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: It is fair to say, as *Commonweal* did in introducing their recent article on Covenant House, that Mark Redmond and Rosanne Haggerty Redmond owed the organization no "loyalty"—and so were guilty of no "betrayal" of any person in describing their experiences there. They did, however, owe loyalty to the truth. And in the one area covered by their article of which I have direct personal knowledge—the advocacy efforts of Covenant House on behalf of homeless and runaway kids—I know that their contentions are uniformly distorted and more often than not wholly false.

The Redmonds claim, essentially, that Covenant House confined its advocacy efforts to the "needs....for more shelters like Covenant House and stronger antipornography legislation" and engaged in "deliberate obfuscations" of the "real circumstances and needs of homeless and runaway young people." Because from 1982 until recently I was executive director of the Institute for Youth Advocacy at Covenant House, I must take at least partial responsibility for what the Redmonds characterize as failures in this area.

I plead guilty to fighting for more shelters for street kids. Through direct lobbying

and in published articles the Institute fought during the 1980s for substantial expansion of the scope and scale of the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. We drafted state statutes to make crisis shelter available for homeless and runaway youth. In 1985 we, alone among child-care organizations, filed a brief defending the constitutionality of providing crisis services to such youth in a major New York case.

I admit as well that we fought child pornography. Alone among organizations serving children, we entered all the landmark cases before the U.S. Supreme Court during the 1980s that established the right of states to prohibit child pornography: *Ferber* (1982), *Oakes* (1989), and *Osborne* (1990). Covenant House played a key role in passage of the Child Protection Act of 1984, as well as other federal laws that drastically reduced the market for "kiddie porn" in this country.

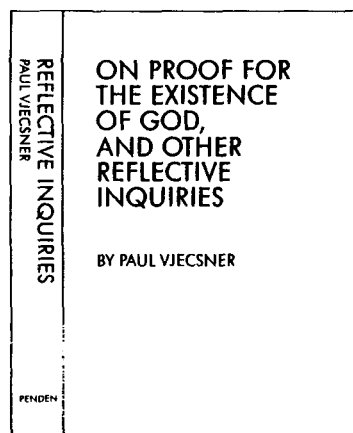
But Mark and Rosanne must know that they failed the truth in saying that our "legislative agenda" was "almost exclusively" limited to those areas. Thus when Rosanne was working in the Institute in 1983, she attended a U.S. Senate subcommittee during which I presented lengthy testimony supporting far greater federal efforts against child abuse.

In January 1984, Father Bruce Ritter delivered a major address to the U.S. Senate Caucus on the Family—later republished in *Representative American Speeches*—in which he described the "disintegration of families and the environments in which they once prospered" and urged substantial welfare and tax reforms to address their plight. In that address, as in countless other writings and speeches, Father Ritter urged national action against child abuse, homelessness, poverty, and social decay. I was at his side in March 1989 when he urged Jack Kemp to undertake major housing initiatives on behalf of disadvantaged youth—an encounter fully reported in New York newspapers.

During the last decade I have testified before congressional committees and published articles supporting legislative change in virtually every area crucial to street youth—urging, e.g., major welfare reform, massive educational assistance for at-risk youth, broad substance-abuse prevention and treatment efforts, stronger state laws

ON PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, AND OTHER REFLECTIVE INQUIRIES

PAUL VJECSENER



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on child prostitution, street-violence prevention efforts, and long-term programs for older homeless youth.

In the courts we have also tried to be effective advocates for these kids. We filed briefs in the U.S. Supreme Court supporting federal efforts to prevent teenage pregnancy (1988) and opposing abortion on demand (1989). The Institute in 1988 filed a brief on behalf of Covenant House and three other charities defending our right to provide emergency services to undocumented young citizens of other countries.

Others in Covenant House were equally forceful in confronting the cruel realities facing street kids. Dr. James Kennedy, director of Covenant House Youth Services, is one of the nation's leading authorities on HIV infections among underclass adolescents, and one of the strongest proponents for national action. Ron Williams, executive director of Covenant House New Jersey, has played a major role in educating Congress and colleagues in the "runaway" field about the needs of older homeless youth.

Because all of this is in the public record, Mark and Rosanne could have kept abreast of it. Or they could have picked up the phone and given me, or other friends familiar with this aspect of Covenant House's work, a call. They could have acknowledged that the SRO law they blamed Covenant House for not supporting was declared flatly unconstitutional by New York's highest court during the past year.

In short, they could have "agonized" as much about telling the whole truth as they say they did about writing their piece in the first place. To be frank, I think what they wrote was frequently vicious and thoroughly unnecessary. But to write it without the most careful attention to the truth is a far greater betrayal of the public, and of the kids, than any failures of Covenant House. And for *Commonweal* to publish such a piece without either meticulous fact-checking or a side-by-side response is, quite simply, a disgrace.

GREGORY A. LOKEN

Dated, disproved

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: In the resignation of Father Bruce Ritter from Covenant House, many

people acutely feel the tragic loss of a hero. For more than two decades, Father Ritter championed the cause of America's street kids like no other advocate. It is indeed sad to feel the pain and disillusionment, particularly of those young people like the Redmonds who once identified as much with the man as with his message.

But your readers should not be left with the impression that [the Redmonds'] article tells much of the story of Covenant House or the young people we serve. The Redmonds' impressions are dated. Their report contains numerous inaccuracies and misinterpretations which neither the Redmonds nor *Commonweal's* editors bothered to check with anyone in a position of responsibility at Covenant House.

For the 28,000 young people who will come to Covenant House this year, 3,000 staff and volunteers, and tens of thousands of supporters, Father Ritter's departure has also been very painful and tragic. To their great credit, the staff and volunteers, who truly make Covenant House what it is, have not lost sight of Father Ritter's vision and our mission. In a time of turmoil and crisis, they have heroically continued to accept every young person who comes to us and to treat them with "the absolute respect and unconditional love" we promise each of them.

Do we fail to live up to this high ideal? On occasion, we do. But the surest indication that our best efforts are on track are the thousands of young men and women who continue to come to us throughout this crisis. They know they will find at Covenant House caring, dedicated, and capable volunteers and staff who want to help them turn their lives around.

Your stated objective in publishing this article was to "go beyond the stereotypes of the newspaper and TV coverage." Regrettably, you failed.

Covenant House exists to serve street kids because Bruce Ritter had the ability and foresight to bring a lot of talented and dedicated people together to serve hurting kids. Ultimately, that is a legacy more valuable than all the hindsight in the world.

JAMES J. HARNETT

The writer is executive vice-president and chief operating officer of Covenant House.

Accurate & balanced

Minneapolis, Minn.

To the Editors: "The Paradoxes of Covenant House" was well written and balanced. It was also painfully accurate. I worked at Covenant House in child care and in corporate administration during 1981 and 1982. I was also a member of the faith community while the Redmonds were there.

My time serving at Covenant House was a life-transforming experience. Now with the revelations of serious misconduct I feel as though a significant part of my life history is being rewritten and I have no control over that process. Reading the Redmonds' article proved therapeutic. I hope that everyone who worked at or contributed to Covenant House has the opportunity to read it.

As the Redmonds state, perhaps the greatest failure of Bruce Ritter and Covenant House was the unwillingness to challenge the systems that cause young people to be trapped in homelessness. Thank God for all the children who have been helped, but thousands more have taken their place because the greater issues



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have not been addressed effectively. Covenant House, because of its influence under the leadership of Father Ritter, could have been a powerful force for justice; instead, the problem became an opportunity for profit....

The analysis provided by the Redmonds is of value to all agencies and ministries. I am grateful for the courage shown by Rosanne Haggerty Redmond, Mark Redmond, and *Commonweal* in presenting us with this article.

CURTISS PAUL DeYOUNG

The writer is pastor of the First Church of God, Minneapolis, Minn.

Candid, compelling

Baltimore, Md.

To the Editors: For many months, I have felt frustration when trying to respond to people's questions about the crisis at Covenant House—questions put to me because I worked at the agency from 1982 to 1986 and spent my first year there as a member of the Covenant Community. The Redmonds' article has made my response

much easier. I simply hand the questioning person a copy of *Commonweal* and tell them to read this frank account of what happened to a ministry which many of us will never stop loving. Their candor was almost painful to read because it calls us all to self-examination of our commitment to represent the needs of the poor underclass of our society. Thank you for the compelling challenge which pervades what could have been a spiritless exposé.

JOHN S. SCHWARTZ

Honesty & compassion

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: ...I salute the editors and the Redmonds for the courage, honesty, good taste, and compassion shown in your editorial and article on Covenant House.

We have been schooled from earliest years that when we have done wrong we should make an act of contrition, confess our sin, and receive absolution. When the matter is a public scandal, should one say, "I am innocent until proved guilty in a court of law"?

Father Ritter and the Franciscans should

have said more than they have said. They have left that task to others—and *Commonweal* is to be commended for being really the first to focus light on the situation, which Frank Macchiarola wanted to do back in January.

BERNARD J. MURRAY

The authors reply:

In writing our piece we followed a simple rule: discuss only facts and circumstances of which we had direct personal knowledge in describing the workings of Covenant House, and acknowledge only those disclosures and charges which have been widely documented in the press since December and to which the agency has failed to make an effective or reassuring response. In all instances these charges are identified as reports and allegations. With respect to these matters, we are not the ones accusing Covenant House: the reports and charges are the subject of ongoing investigations by the New York State Attorney General and others. We stand by the accuracy of our article.

It is particularly ironic that James Harnett offers protest, as he has been prominent in acknowledging in the press, albeit reluctantly, the dubious financial and management practices of which we wrote.

Thus the undefined charges made by some writers of: "numerous inaccuracies and misrepresentations" (Harnett), "instances of disregard for the truth" (Donahue), "(dis)loyalty to the truth" (Loken), and "well-crafted distortion" (Gualano) appear more the product of wishful thinking on the part of some supporters of Father Bruce Ritter than substantive complaints.

What seems to have escaped many of these writers is that our very purpose in reflecting on the paradoxical nature of Covenant House was to acknowledge the many extraordinary aspects of the agency amidst its difficulties. That Covenant House has provided important services in a compelling way, particularly through its policy of "Open Intake" (Gualano)—"[its] doors were always open to young people in need" (Redmond)—was one half of the paradox described in the article. The question of moment, however, is whether a group's virtues in some areas can possibly justify or excuse a pattern of improper con-

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duct in others.

To Anne Donahue's bizarre claim that Bruce Ritter and Covenant House were undermined by some "Macchiarolian" plot, we suggest that the circumstances of Mr. Macchiarola's departure seem more analogous to Richard Nixon's dismissal of Archibald Cox.

Greg Loken's reference to the SRO moratorium law bears elaboration. Not only did Covenant House fail to support the legislation as advocates for New York's homeless argued the case all the way to the state's highest court, but it was actually a *plaintiff* in a lawsuit seeking to overturn the moratorium.

That the moratorium was not upheld is hardly a measure of its moral urgency. Surely the Archdiocese of New York, the Coalition for the Homeless, the City of New York, and other supporters of the law did not consider themselves the losers in this effort, but rather mourned—and mourn—the real victims: the elderly, mentally ill, and other economically marginal adults who have been forced to the street as SRO's have been demolished or converted to higher-priced housing. Covenant House's record as landlord of the Times Square Hotel was particularly shameful: in the years it operated the hotel, 200 permanent tenants were displaced, according to records kept by the Westside SRO Law Project in Manhattan. Let's face it, in joining with the moneyed real estate interests in the city on this issue, Covenant House had economic, not constitutional interests in mind.

The public record, as Mr. Loken points out, is available and all too clear as to the nature and scope of Covenant House's advocacy efforts during the 1980s. As a "Selected Bibliography" published by the Institute for Youth Advocacy at Covenant House documents, fully two-thirds of the agency's statements were devoted to child pornography and prostitution, an emphasis observed in our article. Covenant House has been a tremendously forceful and effective advocate on these very important issues. It is, therefore, all the more painful to read in its public statements Covenant House's implicit endorsement of the supply-side social policy that justified the virtual abandonment of poor and troubled families and children during the 1980s.

In the agency's testimony before the Senate in 1983 and 1984, and in its com-

munication with HUD Secretary Jack Kemp in 1989, events cited by Mr. Loken, the agency explicitly minimizes the centrality and urgency of direct governmental involvement in shaping and funding basic supports and services for these individuals. These statements graphically describe the street life and desperate circumstances of homeless and runaway young people, yet assure legislators and officials that private donors, churches, and volunteers could nicely address the needs of troubled families and young people, given a few more tax incentives to encourage gifts and investment.

The statements appear particularly strange and self-serving when read in the context of contemporaneous testimony and statements by other charitable groups working with these families and children. These groups describe the effectiveness of and unmet demand for federally supported efforts to mitigate child abuse, assist medically frail and emotionally disturbed children, provide counseling and support to troubled families, expand Head Start and day care programs for young children and programs to keep teenagers in school, and to increase job training opportunities and the supply of affordable housing. As the executive director of Camp Fire, Inc., a national organization serving over 500,000 children, observed at the same hearing at which Mr. Loken testified in 1983: "It is ridiculous to assume that private support can fill the gap left by an elimination of public support. And this statement comes from an organization *whose backbone* is built on volunteerism."

We are left to ponder the best meaning of loyalty in the tragic situation that exists for Bruce Ritter and the inspired program he created. Would that those closest to him and most invested in the agency's work had acknowledged in the volatile nature of what Ms. Donahue describes as the "arrogance, and vision, and singlemindedness" driving the agency, the potential for ill as well as good, and monitored that threat more responsibly.

ROSANNE HAGGERTY REDMOND
& MARK REDMOND

The editors respond:

Commonweal does not re-research in detail every article we publish. We do our best

to ascertain the authors' knowledge and fairness, and to scrutinize carefully any particularly sensitive charges. We did both these things in the case of the Redmonds' manuscript. We feel our judgment confirmed by the critical letters above, which contain a high proportion of blanket assertion and denunciation and—with the exception of Gregory A. Loken's letter, which the Redmond's effectively refute—an almost total absence of specific facts. We, too, initially doubted the charges raised against Father Ritter and Covenant House. But the time is long past for letting personal or tribal loyalty preclude a mature, thoughtful review of Covenant House's work, which is what the Redmonds provided in their original essay and now in their response.

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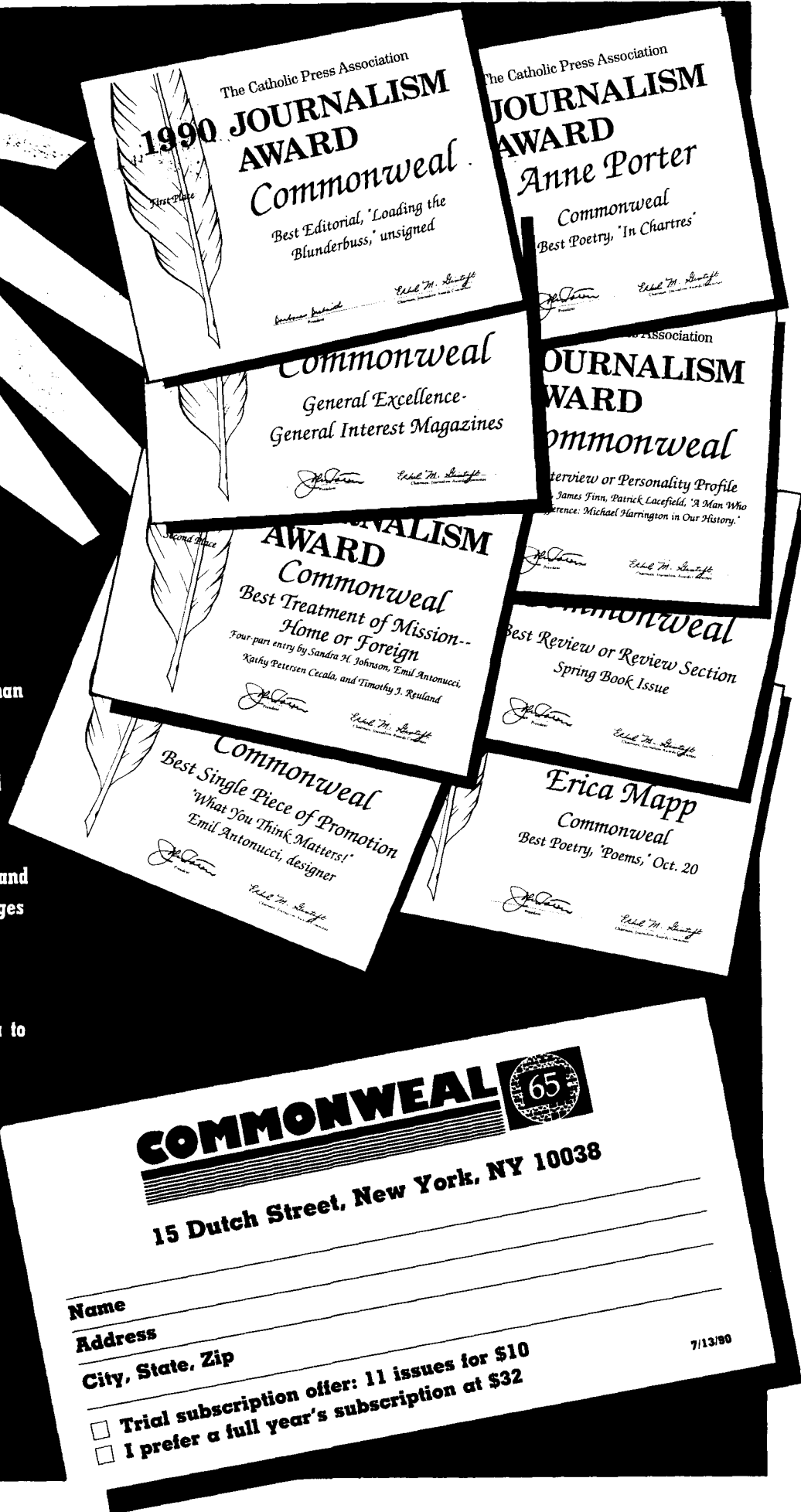
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